

KEATS AND SPENSER

BENARES HINDU UNIVERSITY LECTURES

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TO
THE SAD MEMORY
OF
MY DAUGHTER
REBA
WHO PASSED AWAY
DURING THE PREPARATION
OF
THESE LECTURES

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PREFACE

This volume consists of a course of lectures I was invited to deliver at the Benares Hindu University in November, 1943. I actually delivered four lectures, but the third lecture has been split up into Chapters III and IV of the present publication.

The preparation of these lectures was interrupted by unforeseen and tragic circumstances. I had other difficulties, too. Some important books, for example, could not, on account of the war emergency, be procured from Europe, and my treatment of certain topics has not been as exhaustive as I should have liked it to be.

The Bibliography indicates my obligations, but not exhaustively. There may also be cases of oversight. Detailed references have been supplied in the foot-notes as far as possible.

I am obliged to Sir Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan, Vice-Chancellor of the Benares Hindu University, for the opportunity of delivering these lectures at a distinguished seat of learning, and to its teachers and students for their very kind appreciation. The first lecture was published at the instance of Prof. U. C. Nag in Volume VIII of the Journal of the Benares Hindu University. I have to thank Dr. C. N. Menon in this connection for his courtesy in reading the proofs and helping its first publication. It reappears in this volume with a few alterations,

It is not for me to offer any remark on the contents of this volume. But Chapters II, IV and V are likely to arouse controversy. The resemblance between Spenser and the Pre-Raphaelites has not, as far as I am aware, been yet studied. Platonic ideas are not always distinguishable from idealistic clichés, and Keats's Platonism may be explained away as such. Keats was hardly a scholar, and the circumstances of his life appear to render his inclination to transcendental philosophy unlikely. Psycho-analysis is a growing science, and many will doubt the wisdom of its application to literature. But differences of opinion are inevitable in every sphere of study and enquiry.

I must take this opportunity of offering my thanks to Mr. K. B. Roy, Mr. S. C. Roy and Mr. T. N. Sen, my colleagues in the Department of English of the Calcutta University, for their manifold assistance, including proof-reading. Thanks are also due to the officers of the Calcutta University Press, who gave me every facility and expedited the printing and publication of this volume.

Some mistakes have been corrected in the *Errata*. But there may be others; and I shall feel grateful if readers will kindly bring them to my notice.

CALCUTTA : {
July, 1944. }

M. M. BHATTACHERJE

KEATS AND SPENSER

CHAPTER I

ECLECTICISM AND IDEALISM IN SPENSER

Matthew Arnold complained against Victorian England's insular spirit and lack of curiosity. Self-complacency was, according to him, a most prominent defect of the British to whom he imputed as its consequence narrowness of outlook and of intellectual sympathy. He tried to correct this defect by drawing their attention to continental culture which was international in character, and to the flexibility of intelligence of the French whose genius for criticism had inspired him. "What does he know of England who only England knows?"—was the query of one Englishman. Arnold expresses a similar idea in his somewhat irreverent remark: "He who knows the Bible only, does not know the Bible even." His charge against Victorian England, whether justifiable or not, could not be levelled against Elizabethan England.

In the domain of thought Elizabethan England was an extensive borrower. The sources of its obligation were many and the obligation was indiscriminate. Love of classical culture was derived from continental centres of learning visited by Colet, Grocyn and other scholars. Neo-Platonism with its

elaborations was borrowed from Italy, and Aristotelian ideas infiltrated through peripatetic treatises like *Eudemian Ethics* and *Magna Moralia*. Sonneteering was learnt from Petrarch and the Pléiade school of France, Christian mysticism from Dante, and the new system of Astronomy from Copernicus. Protestantism was the gift of the French theologian Calvin and of the German reformer Luther, and Catholicism with its delicate symbolism that of mediæval churchmen and specially of Aquinas. Chivalry and Romance came from France and Spain, and statecraft from Renaissance Italy. Elizabethan translations with their vast range prove England's avidity for fresh idea and new information. Renderings from Spanish and Italian—of fiction, discourse, drama and history—were copious and very popular. Translations from French and German, though smaller in volume, were yet numerous. Fresh ideas can be gathered as much from travels as from study, and it was not for nothing that continental travel was recommended to the Elizabethan youth. They not only imbibed ideas and gathered information for themselves, but also became a source of inspiration to their countrymen. So keen was England's hankering for borrowed knowledge that it has been suggested that the Elizabethans did not originate any new idea, but merely utilised and pieced together foreign thoughts evolved under different circumstances in different ages. The discoveries for which the age was famous, were confined to the physical world, and even these were not many. The Elizabethan Age has accordingly been called eclectic. It consumed but did not produce.

Eclecticism is almost the opposite of creation. Information and scholarship, on which it is based, are essentially different from deep synthesis and fresh orientation. Eclecticism does not suggest a new order of things. It is to a certain extent the mark of the practical man, not of the profound thinker, of a business-like spirit of compromise, not of a bold outlook. The deliverer of a striking message, the propounder of an original idea and the preacher of a new gospel are never eclectics. The history of human thought furnishes examples of eclecticism which have been barren of original output and productive of mere wordy disputation. It always tends to spring up after a period of vigorous constructive speculation, especially in the later stages of a controversy between thinkers of pre-eminent talents. Their respective followers and, more specially, cultured laymen, lacking the capacity for original work, seeking the solution in some kind of compromise and possibly failing to grasp the essentials of the controversy, take refuge in a combination of those elements in the opposing systems which seem to afford a sound practical theory. Such a combination is as illogical as facile, and eclecticism has generally acquired a somewhat contemptuous significance. At the same time, "the essence of eclecticism is the refusal to follow blindly one set of formulæ and conventions, coupled with a determination to recognise and select from all sources those elements which, though not good and true in the abstract, are in practical affairs most useful *ad hoc*."* In the last stage of Greek philo-

* *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 14th edition.

sophy thinkers chose their doctrines from Aristotle, Plato, the Pythagoreans, the Stoics, Jewish and other oriental systems. In the second century B.C. a remarkable tendency to eclecticism manifested itself in Rome. In neither case was any real contribution made to the progress of human culture.

Elizabethan eclecticism was reflected in Spenser's work more than in that of any of his contemporaries. The reason is to be found in the strange and unprecedented combination in Spenser of a rich and versatile intellectual culture which began at Cambridge and a most chequered worldly career.

After leaving the University and seeking his fortune in vain in literary work, Spenser 'turned his hopes of preferment for a time towards the church' and became secretary to the Bishop of Rochester. The young man soon realised that learned scholars like him had no prospects in the church, and the *Shepherds' Calendar* reflected his disappointment. He railed against the humiliating methods by which a benefice or curacy could be obtained and "denounced the enormity of admitting slothful unlettered persons into the clergy, and also the encroachments of lords and ministers on the possessions and privileges of the church." He now turned in disgust to the courtier's life, became acquainted with Sidney and his literary and courtly friends, was received into the household of Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester, and was introduced to the Queen. Spenser spent happily the first year of his service under Lord Leicester. He became a member of Sidney's *Areopagus* and prospects of preferment looked brighter. But he

soon found out that the real courtier was very different from the product of Castiglione's imagination. An atmosphere of fawning flattery and vice was uncongenial to a man of culture like Spenser, and he left for Ireland as private secretary to Lord Grey de Wilton, the Lord Lieutenant. Exile thus secured for him a position where he had not to flatter and cringe or depend on patronage. Though he rose by degrees to a high position as landowner in Munster, his experience of the "Salvage nation" was by no means happy. He found treachery, intrigue, and superstition in the Irish people and the Jesuit emissaries, and violence and ruthlessness in the powerful English rulers, especially his own chief. Desmond's rebellion and its suppression turbulent savagery followed by terrible retribution—left an un-
easy impression on the young poet. Though Spenser did not approve of the British policy in Ireland, he fully supported Lord Grey's activities and looked upon the Irish as dangerous criminals and traitors deserving the severest punishment. He saw in Ireland lonely regions, dense, trackless forests, gloomy glades and steep hills, which were to suggest the scenes of knightly adventure in his immortal poem. The exile was interrupted and its inherent gloom temporarily relieved when, after ten years, he arrived at the royal court under the patronage of Sir Walter Raleigh with the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*, and basked for a few months in the sunshine of the Queen's favour. Surrounded by brilliant pageantry and dazzled by the splendour of the 'royal state,' Spenser imagined that fortune had at last smiled on

him. The Queen, the lords and the ladies admired the rising poet and showered their praises on him. But his eyes were soon opened to the seamy side of the royal court—to its intrigues, jealousies and moral turpitude. Neglect of friends, indifference of patrons and perfidy of rival poets galled his spirit, and his panegyric of the court in the *Faerie Queene* turned into satire in *Mother Hubberds Tale*, *Colin Clouts come Home again* and *Muipotmos*. Returning to Ireland a sadder and wiser man, he married and found that bliss which he had vainly hoped to enjoy in the realisation of his early ambitions at the royal court. It was soon, however, blasted by fate. Friend, lover, dependant, courtier, official supporting a ruthless policy against rebels, Spenser had thus an experience of life as varied as his knowledge and scholarship.

This parallelism between his life and scholarship was responsible for a curious combination of diverse and heterogeneous matters in Spenser's work—ancient philosophy and the full-blooded life of the Renaissance, contemporary politics and strict Calvinistic discipline, the gorgeous rituals of the Catholic Church and Elizabethan adventures, chivalric romance and simony, classical mythology and Anabaptist theories, Christian charity and ruthless Irish policy, Platonic beauty and Jesuit intrigues. Each captivated the imagination of Spenser, inspired his poetry and was deliberately woven into the structure of his allegories. It would be difficult to single out any one of these as his special favourite. Such a remark could not be made with reference to any other writer.

None or very few are equally attracted by so many dissimilar matters at the same time. Almost every one has a predominant interest to which his other interests are distinctly subordinate and to which sometimes they are deliberately sacrificed, and some may even have only a single interest. Milton loves moral sublimity, and love of liberty which is chiefly the theme of his prose works is subordinate to this. Shelley is predominantly a lover of beauty, though he sings of liberty as well. Scott's main interest centres round the variegated Middle Ages—their heroism, their glamour and splash of colour. Sensuous beauty is the special province of Keats and silent communion with the spirit of Nature is the message of Wordsworth's poetry. Undoubtedly Shakespeare had no special predilection; but this furnishes no point of comparison between him and Spenser, for though his knowledge was vast and his interests manifold, they did not all equally dominate his imagination as in the case of Spenser. He indeed casts his glance at Mediaeval Europe, the Roman world, Renaissance Italy, etc., and studies man's mind in its various aspects—passion, ambition, jealousy, etc. But they do not equally engross his attention, or hold him in thrall. His knowledge and experience, varied as they were, were fused into a separate amalgam, were sublimated and transformed, beyond recognition, into the new world he built up and into the fresh values he created. Here lies his originality. Spenser's scholarship and experiences retained an unshakable hold on his memory, and directly inspired his poetry. He could not forget them or free himself

from their influence. They seem to have been reproduced in his work exactly as he had acquired them. Spenser was really lacking in that white heat of imagination that sublimates varied impressions into an altogether new entity and suffuses it with a new light, a "light that never was on sea or land."

Spenser has often been called a child of the Renaissance, and his love of classical culture, Greek mythology and Platonism are adduced as evidence. But he really flourished at the junction of two areas, and the culture of the Middle Ages survived as an active force for centuries even after the revival of classical studies had begun. Spenser felt its fascination and imbibed its spirit to the fullest extent. As a critic pertinently observes, "He was a man of the Renaissance, but he was in the main a poet of the 'olden time.' He lived in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, but his genius lived, even more decisively than that of Chaucer, in the days of Queen Philippa." Absolutely unlike that of the Renaissance, for example, was Spenser's idea of woman. Womanhood in Spenser is not characterized by frigid Renaissance intellectualism but by serene "affections lighted by the sun of Christian faith, and freshened by the airs of human sympathy." Reference may be made to Una who, forlorn and veiled, never utters a word of protest against desertion by her beloved* and to Amoret sitting in the lap of Womanhood in the Temple of

* The purity of Una, unlike that of Belpheobe or Britomart, has culminated in sanctity, and is symbolised by that veil on the rare removal of which her face sends forth a divine radiance. This conception of character, at once Christian and womanly, belongs to earlier Italian poetry.

Venus. On the steps of Venus's throne are placed "goodly shamefastness," "Cheerfulnesse," "sober Modestie" and "Comely Curtesie" and opposite to the latter "soft silence" and "Submissive obedience." "This is not the Renaissance, it is the mediaeval time. St. Bernard and the Crusaders lived on in Spenser's true poetry."*

Spenser took kindly to the moral virtues of chivalry as much as to Renaissance courtesy. In form the *Faerie Queene* is a romance of mediaeval chivalry, and its heroes are typical knights endowed with virtues enjoined upon by the chivalric code, e.g., courage, good faith, liberality, sense of honour, respect for women and piety, though at the same time, they are also the products of the Renaissance—courtiers corresponding to modern gentlemen, possessing charm of personality, humour, eloquence, knowledge of poetry, history, etc., grace and what has been called *sprezzatura*.

If Spenser was not exclusively 'the child of the Renaissance,' neither was he the product of the Middle Ages. Hence he could not, suggests Aubrey de Vere, write the romantic poem of mediaeval life, as Dante wrote its epic (or mystical poem). His heart was indeed devoted to the tradition of the Middle Ages, but his intellect inclined to Hellenic culture. The latter along with the new discoveries and intellectual controversies of the sixteenth century, had undoubtedly an awakening effect on Spenser's genius. But these also drew that genius aside from what would have

* Aubrey de Vere, *Characteristics of Spenser's Poetry*.

been its natural walk. " Had Spenser been a mediaeval poet, he would have given us on a large scale, and fitly combined such illustration of things spiritual, seen from the poetic point of view, as Chaucer's enchanting ' Legend of St. Cecilia ' has given us in a fragmentary form. In the early chronicles he would also have found large materials ; for even the minuter events of the Middle Ages must have then retained a significance lost for us. Still more full of meaning must the chivalric romances have then been. He would have selected and combined their treasures, and become their great poetic representative. Spenser would thus, too, have found a far ampler field for that unconscious symbolism which belongs to high poetry, and especially to his ; and he would not have been driven upon those artificial allegories which chill many a page of his verse.....It was for the human side of a great mediaeval theme that Spenser's especial characteristics would have pre-eminently qualified him, as it was the supernatural side that challenged most the genius of Dante. He had a special gift for illustrating the offices and relationships of human life."* " That beauty which ever haunted Spenser's mind, would have shone forth as a thing inherent in the conditions of all true social existence even here below."†

Spenser's religious sympathies too were not exclusive. There were political objections against Catholicism in Elizabethan England, but apart from its active programme and its gross superstitions, it

* Aubrey de Vere, *Characteristics of Spenser's Poetry*.

† *Ibid.*

commanded Spenser's unstinted admiration. The House of Holiness in Canto X of Bk. I of the *Faerie Queene* embodies the genius of Catholicism in an unmistakable manner. The procession of the Seven Deadly Sins in Canto IV of Bk. I shows further Spenser's obligation to Catholic theology. His love of Protestantism - of its simple worship and moral ardour - is revealed in the destruction of Acrasia's Bower (Canto XII of Bk. II), the killing of Kirkrapine by the lion (Canto III of Bk. I) and the spoliation of Duessa (Canto VIII of Bk. I) by Prince Arthur.

That Spenser's homage and admiration were divided in other spheres too can be aptly illustrated by reference to his allegories. These are capable of manifold interpretations. Una in Book I of the *Faerie Queene* represents Gospel Truth, Platonic Reality and Reformed Protestant church. Her marriage with Redcrosse symbolises the merger of the human soul in God as taught by Neo-Platonic Philosophy, the establishment of the Reformed Protestant faith as the State religion in England and the triumph of the Gospel as the guide of man. Holiness is at the same time the Aristotelian magnanimity, Platonic justice and Calvinistic sanctity. In Book II Medina is believed to be the Aristotelian mean of Gentleness, while Elissa and Hudibras represent one extreme and Perissa and Sansloy the other. Guyon may stand for the Aristotelian mean of Temperance and Pyrochles and Cymochles for its two extremes. But a Platonic interpretation is also apt, and according to it, Pyrochles, Cymochles and Guyon or Arthur symbolise the tripartite division of the human soul

into passion, concupiscence and reason which are also figured forth in Elissa, Perissa and Medina on the one hand and Hudibras, Sansloy and Medina or Guyon on the other. The Hill of Contemplation which Redcrosse ascends means meditation on the next world advocated by Calvin as a fitting sequel to an active life devoted to works of charity; it also means strenuous intellectual culture, as distinct from sense-knowledge, involving a training in dialectic as taught by Plato. The brilliant city visible to Redcrosse from the top of the Hill of Contemplation* may stand for Heavenly Jerusalem as painted in the Book of Revelation; it has also been interpreted as Supreme Beauty or the vast sea of Beauty, the last rung of the ladder of ascent in the *Symposium*. Of the four Hymns, the first two are devoted to the Platonic conceptions of love and beauty current during the Renaissance. Spenser soon regrets his imagined folly, vanity and carnal proclivities as manifested in these compositions of "the greener times of my youth," recants and wants to withdraw them from circulation, but thinks better and as a sort of penance writes two more Hymns on Divine love and Christian mysticism, in which Christ's holy life and its teachings are introduced.

"A short poem may have the bright perfection of a flower, an epic the stately mass of a tree that combines the variety of its branches with the unity

* The canto describing this, it has been said, "is one in which Plato, could he have returned to earth, would have found the realisation of his loftiest dreams: in which St. Thomas Aquinas would have discovered no fault; and in which St. Augustine would have rejoiced."

of the stem : but a romance of this intricate character is neither the flower nor the tree,—it is a labyrinth of underwood not easily pierced.”* This charge against the *Fuerie Queene* relating to defect of construction is unanswerable. Apart from the lack of design which characterizes the poem as a whole, each of its separate episodes is faulty in construction and almost each is inconclusive.† Each was originally intended to symbolise a distinct idea or to illustrate a moral truth. When this object had been partly fulfilled and the episode had made some progress, the poet probably recollected an historical event or, more often another rival or allied ethical conception or philosophical principle which also claimed his attention, and felt tempted to allegorise this as well. When this was done, the thread of the first narrative was snapped, the significance changed, and Spenser diverted the story into a new and quite unexpected channel. The impression produced on the mind of the reader is one of bewildered amazement, and he wonders how the story might end and what the author might mean. When the story had been made to move along a new groove, and to bear a new meaning, some of the old characters would re-appear in their new rôle and would be responsible for a further confusion of situation and significance.‡ The tale of the twin sisters

* Aubrey de Vere, *Characteristics of Spenser's Poetry*.

† Spenser's stories may be contrasted with Chaucer's, while their incompleteness spoils the allegories, it serves to illustrate Spenser's divided allegiance and sympathy.

‡ Aubrey de Vere, *Characteristics of Spenser's Poetry*.

Belphoebe and Amoret is one of the loveliest, deepest and most original of legends; yet, for most readers, its beauty and even its meaning are drowned in interruptions that perplex it.

Sometimes anomalies and anachronisms of a glaring kind issue out of Spenser's varied scholarship and wide range of intellectual sympathy. The Palace of Mercilla in the "Legend of Justice" is magnificently described as the temple of justice. Mercilla sits on the throne as the goddess who holds the scales of justice even in this lower world. "Nothing can be subtler than the symbolism, more splendid than the imagery, more skilful than the mode in which the solemn process is carried on before that high tribunal." The warder at the gate is Awe, and the Marshal in the Hall is Order. The "cloth of state" which hangs like a cloud above the head of the goddess seems to be held by little angels, and Dice, Eunomie, Eirene, Temperance and Reverence are in attendance. The times are antique, possibly those of the Round Table. But the legend comes to an abrupt end, for Spenser's mind is suddenly directed towards the political events which convulsed England. Mary (Duessa), Queen of Scotland, comes to take her trial before the daughter of Anne Boleyn (whom Mercilla now comes to represent) for immorality, treason, murder and transgression of the law of nations. Elizabeth's reluctance to pronounce sentence against the accused is made manifest. Soon after, England's victories against Spain in the Low countries are celebrated as a marvellous achievement of Prince Arthur. The confusion grievously detracts from the poetic effect.

Spenser is a philosophic poet and is often called a philosopher. But he has hardly any philosophy of his own. Wordsworth has a consistent view of nature and man. Tennyson and Browning have their characteristic ways of grappling with moral and religious problems. Shelley has his theory of love and idea of liberty upon which he pinned his sincere faith. Spenser is not comparable to any one of these. He was familiar with systems like Hesiod's, Lucretius's, Bruno's and Plato's and drew upon them all at leisure. But he was never troubled with their inconsistencies, if any, and was not interested in reconciling them. He does not appear to have had his preferences, though he referred to Plato oftener than to others. The theologies of Calvin, of Luther, of Aquinas equally interested him, and he did not choose any one as his special favourite. Aristotle's ethical system, the manuals of conduct of Renaissance Italy, Cicero's work on Friendship had the same attraction for him. He had no exclusive and definite philosophical, theological or ethical ideal.

It has been remarked that Spenser's mind was "a whole and not merely a collection of faculties or parts,"* often, in inferior minds, disproportioned to that whole. This is true only in one sense. His faculties indeed worked harmoniously and when he was at his best, no one could say which of them predominated. "The passages characterised in the highest degree by descriptive power, are characterised not less by loveliness, by suggestiveness, by moral

* Aubrey de Vere, *Characteristics of Spenser's Poetry*.

wisdom, and commonly by spiritual aspiration." But the statement is untrue in another sense. With all his versatile intellect and scholarship which were responsible for his varied interests, he had no distinctive angle of vision or outlook on men and things. Impressions and facts appealed to him but not the laws or principles underlying them. His mind did not discover any link amongst his experiences, and it is these that kindled his poetic instinct almost at random. His images appear in quick succession. It seems as if the poet wants to produce temporary magical effects through a stream of impressions without conveying any consistent, abiding or comprehensive message in the abstract. It is the same whether he narrates incidents or describes scenery. Quick movement characterises most of his images. Scholars have actually traced some of these to paintings and tapestries. But tableaux, dumb-shows, and stage-representations of morality plays too have been pointed out as sources of Spenser's phantasmagoric processions. His models are, as it were, characters in dumb-shows that pass before the audience one by one, making symbolic gestures and assuming expressions typifying the abstractions they are meant to represent.*

The procession of Queen Lucifera and the Seven Deadly Sins is an apt illustration. The March of the seasons and months in Book VII of the *Faerie Queene* is another, and fills about 20 stanzas—first come the four seasons, then each of the twelve months, next Day and Night, then the Hours, and last Life and Death.

* Legouis, *Spenser*, Ch. V.

The story element is slight, and the significance meagre in both. These are possibly extreme cases :
 • but reference may be made to the succession of incidents in Cantos III-VI of Book I, *viz.*, the fight between Sansloy and Archimago and between Redcrosse and Sansjoy, the meeting of Duessa and Night and their journey to Hell, Una's rescue by the Satyrs and the fight between Satyrane and Sansloy, which remains inconclusive.

Spenser was thus inspired not by one ideal only but by more ideals than one.* Sometimes these were in direct opposition. Sense and reason, Paganism and Christianity, the life of strenuous activity and of intellectual culture, the bold, fiery warrior and the quiet ascetic, the courtier and the scholar, the brilliant pageantry of the English capital and the silence of the trackless forests in Ireland equally inspired him. These produce an indelible impression of discord. To examine the conflict between moral and carnal elements in Spenser's poetry. The object of the *Faerie Queene*, as the Letter to Raleigh mentions, "is to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." Redcrosse, the Christian knight, wears the armour of St. Paul, including the shield of faith, breast-plate of righteousness, etc. Sir Guyon, the emblem of Temperance, scrupulously sets his face against temptation in all its forms. Yet Spenser's choicest art is lavished on depicting the Bower of Bliss, its voluptuous beauty, and the seductive charms of Acrasia and her lascivious maidens. On the floating island, which is the dwelling-place of

* Ronwick, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 161.

Phaedria, 'false delight,' 'pleasures vayn' and a lewd song lull a fiery warrior to sleep. The mural paintings and tapestries in the House of Busirane portray carnal love and beauty of the flesh in a manner which brings out Spenser's poetic genius at the height of its glory. It has been suggested that here outer physical charm often out-dazzles the inward lustre of virtue. The wanton nymphs of the Marvellous Fountain in the Bower of Acrasia are so enticing that they almost efface the pure and chaste image of Una. Morality, when preached by the poet, seems almost out of place among the manifold seductions of his Fairyland, and "Spenser makes the reader almost cry out against Sir Guyon for devastating the enchanted bower of false delights.....Nothing can replace that magical garden of luxuriousness, or compare with it in splendour, and make amends for its ruins." This may be an extreme view. The other extreme view harps on Spenser's power of edification and of propagation of ascetic and religious convictions. Spenser is on this view the sage poet, a "better teacher than Scotus, or Aquinas." Reasonable and moderate criticism will agree that there is no predominance of either the seductive or the moral element in Spenser's poetry, but that, though obtrusive, both have been put on the same footing.

His imagination had an affinity with the Pagan outlook, and was in fact influenced by it. It inclined to beautiful forms, colours and sounds of this earth and especially to woman's beauty. But this imagination was repressed and always held in check by the Christian sense of the vanity of all sensual delights,

and by the fear of sin. In the *Shepherds Calender* religion fills almost as much space as love. *The Ruines of Rome*, *Visions of the Worlds Vanitie*, *Ballayes Visions*, and *The Ruines of Time* seek to turn man's mind from worldly vanity to eternal reality and are full of denunciations of sin. As Legouis puts it, "In his great poem, his innate (Pagan) voluptuousness is in constant antagonism with his earnest Protestant, almost Puritanical creed. He would sacrifice neither. But to compromise and preserve them both, he only could append a moral to the most sensual of his scenes. He reminds us of the artist who paints a splendid woman in the nude and writes 'Chastity' in the margin of his canvas; then paints another, no less beautiful, and, contenting himself with giving an evil cast to her eyes, then tells us that it is the portrait of 'Wantonness.' The painter satisfies his moral scruples by giving the two pictures different titles."*

The compromise referred to in the extract was a makeshift arrangement—a patched-up truce between Paganism and Christianity. In Spenser there is no real sublimation or transmutation of Pagan delight in pleasure into Christian piety—of voluptuousness into earnest spirituality. Hence his "religious fervour was superficial rather than deep, more concerned with outward problems than with the intimate spirit of Christianity. One finds but few traces of direct communion with Christ in him," and the "spirit of the Gospel is mostly absent from his verse."† The

* Legouis, *Spenser*, p. 137.

† Legouis, *Spenser*, p. 29.

Bible was not the most cherished amongst the books he read, nor is it to be recognised as the greatest influence in his poetry. When he comes to reflect on religion, he is generally concerned with one of its superficial aspects, *viz.*, church discipline. In the *Shepherds Calender* he is a Protestant rather than a devout Christian. It must be remembered in this connection that spiritual poetry which was at the same time beautiful and moving and which was based on the sublimation of sense-experience, did flourish in England, especially in the seventeenth century. Milton and Vaughan are conspicuous examples. Even Chaucer, Spenser's master, though he took the world easy, had a larger share of the spirit of true Christianity. Spenser, therefore, was not expected to achieve something impossible.

That Spenser did not progress from sense to spirituality and that all that he attempted was an unsatisfactory compromise between the two, is borne out by the fact that there was no regular evolution of moral or religious feelings in his works. Years did not bring a change in his inner life or in his outlook. More space is given to religious problems (though these were mainly sectarian) in the *Shepherds Calender*, his earliest poem, than in most of his later works. It should have been otherwise. In the *Faerie Queene* the first book is the most religious, as the second is the most moral of all. The other books might have been equally religious or moral. But the poet becomes more and more a romance-writer or story-teller as he proceeds, and "the sustained gravity of the teacher gives place to the capricious fancy of the amorist."

Thus there has been no steady progress from "thoughtless half-pagan youthful joy to the pensive mood of the Christian sage." His ideas were determined by circumstances, and were not the product of conviction or inner realisation. It has been aptly remarked that "the courtier in Leicester's palace turned to subjects less ecclesiastical than those which had occupied the Secretary of Bishop Young. The exile in Ireland under the stern influence of the Puritanical Lord Lieutenant entertained more serious thoughts than he did in the years that followed Grey's retirement." Similarly the progress of his wooing of Elizabeth Boyle is reflected in the *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, while the Heavenly Hymns have to be traced to the despondency of an unsuccessful courtier and the bitter grief of a ruined Irish landlord suffering the pangs of bereavement.

The compromise between Pagan outlook and Christian was effected at least in part through Spenser's acceptance of the Neo-Platonic creed. Neo-Platonism itself was eclectic, and it fittingly flourished at Alexandria which in the beginning of the Christian era was the melting-pot of various eastern and Hellenic systems of thought. It gave Spenser full liberty "to follow his instincts and call his joy by the same name as his duty" and also call "all his lover's emotions heavenward aspirations." It further justified him as a poet in following his natural bent and in revelling in the gorgeous description of beautiful forms and colours.

In spite of this eclecticism* which must be regarded

* For Spenser's eclecticism, see B. E. C. Davis's *Edmund Spenser*, Ch. IX.

as a defect, Spenser was an idealist because he was not a realist. His scholarship which was responsible for his eclecticism was also partly responsible for his idealism in this special sense. It made him a lover of the distant past and a stranger to contemporary life. He was more familiar with the age of chivalry than with his own age—was a dweller in the land of romance, as it were, and not in Elizabethan England. Classical mythology and mediæval life were better known to him than human nature which revealed itself around him every day. Hence, as Hazlitt says, "Spenser's characteristic is remoteness." This has also been called his unhomeliness. The ordinary and familiar did not attract him. Most readers are repelled by this feature of Spenser's poetry and find it very difficult to approach him. It has been remarked that one cannot find an English daisy in his enchanted forests.

If Spenser was heedless of living reality and a lover of the past, it does not follow that he was a careful observer of old manners, customs and institutions. He was not a close student of the Middle Ages as Scott was, nor of the ancient world. It was impossible for him to gauge the full stature of a historical personage, to probe his psychology or appreciate the full consequence of an historical event. Contemplation and not observation was his province. Spenser's world was not the world of 'historic visibility.' He was not capable of pure and dispassionate observation of external things. "His word concerning what is outward is not to be taken; he is un-veracious."*

* William Hubbard, *The Introspection and Outlook of Spenser*.

It cannot be claimed that Spenser reconstructed the past or made it live again. The achievement of Shakespeare in his Roman plays has no parallel in the work of Spenser. His ideal was exclusively his own creation, and was as different from the world known to his contemporaries as from the world enshrined in history. "The universe generally as it came to his hand was not to his mind. It refused to dovetail with his conceptions and designs. He was not king in it. So, with small regard to existing interests, he, by a process and magic all his own, transformed it into a 'Faery' Land..... It is a world in which, to the looker-on, anything seems to happen. Events purely considered are bound by no inevitable consequences...."* In this world there is neither time nor space; yet it is "full of form, colour, and all earthly luxury....this place, somewhere between mind and matter, between soul and sense, between the actual and the possible, is precisely the region which Spenser assigns to the poetic susceptibility of impression."†

Even where Spenser's characters are in fact suggested by historical men and women, they are not real, because they are completely transformed before being admitted into the Fairy Land. He idealises them out of all likeness. He was not a mirror-holder for his contemporaries.‡ When starting with a living man, friend or foe, his imagination lightened upon and played about him, altering combinations and proportions, adding feature to feature,

* William Hubbard, *The Introspection and Outlook of Spenser*.

† Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol. IV, p. 335.

‡ *The Introspection and Outlook of Spenser*.

attribute to attribute, until in his creative delight he forgot whom he intended to paint. Lord Grey de Wilton becomes Artegall, the Knight of Justice, Leicester appears as Prince Arthur, Mary is Lucifera or Duessa, and Burleigh is transformed into the Blatant Beast.

Spenser's scenes and characters, though removed from real life and having 'an air of far-off-ness,' are not, on that account, wholly artificial. They are easily recognisable as belonging to another world to the laws of which they fully conform. The arms, decorations and robes belong to the age of chivalry, while the virtues and vices are traceable to the romances or to moral treatises or courtesy-books. Lowell observes: "He (Spenser) at first sought for that remoteness, which is implied in an escape from the realism of daily life, in the pastoral,—a kind of writing which, oddly enough, from its original intention as a protest in favour of naturalness, and of human as opposed to heroic sentiments, had degenerated into the most artificial of abstractions. But he was soon convinced of his error, and was not long in choosing between an unreality which pretended to be real and those everlasting realities of the mind which seem unreal only because they lie beyond the horizon of the everyday world, and become visible only when the mirage of fantasy lifts them up and hangs them in an ideal atmosphere."*

Spenser was of humble birth, and was one "of the poor scholars" at Merchant Taylors' School assisted by the charity of a town merchant, and subsequently

* Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol IV, pp. 283-84.

a sizar at Pembroke Hall. The natural outcome of poverty was a desire for competence and fame which his academic career led him to expect as a matter of course. But as he found his hopes difficult of realisation, he felt dissatisfied. *Muiopotmos* paints the kind of life which would have given him satisfaction. *The Teares of the Muses*, on the other hand, reflects his disappointment, for all the nine Muses are equally distressed and indignant at being neglected. Baffled ambition and worry stimulated his innate idealism which had also been fostered by literary and philosophical studies. Spenser's imagination loved to dwell on the felicities of a golden age about which he had read and which fitted in well with his visionary temperament. As a consequence Spenser became a carping critic of his age. "His most constant attitude through life was that of discontent. He very seldom shows himself pleased and satisfied, and is quick to pass sentence on persons and manners."* Nearly all his works, with the obvious exception of the *Fourre Hymnes*, the *Amoretti*, *Prothalamion* and *Epithalamion*, contain satires against the court and the church.

One of the characteristics of the golden age as generally conceived was equal opportunity for all, based on equal division of property. The giant in Bk. V of the *Faerie Queene* is the champion of equality and is ready to level down the hills and to weigh in his scales such things as "winged words," "The true and the false," "the right and so much wrong." He would suppress tyrants and lordlings that the

* Legouis, *Spenser*, p. 7.

"commons over-awe" and "all things would reduce unto equality." Spenser's age did not like revolution, and the poet probably means to express his dislike to Anabaptist theories by making the Giant a butt of mild satire. At Cambridge, however, Spenser himself had come in touch with the violent and revolutionary spirit of the theological school and imbibed the teachings of Cartwright. But Grindal had been instrumental in getting Spenser admitted to his own old College, and Spenser became a supporter of mitigated Puritanism. Yet the quasi-socialistic doctrines of Cartwright, which led him to declare war on all forms of dignity, scholastic as well as ecclesiastic, and to try to bring the church back to its "pristine equality and simplicity," are traceable in Spenser's *Shepherds' Calendar*. He once dreamt of abolishing prelacy in the manner of the extreme Puritans or Mar-Prelates, and often protested against the ambition and luxury of the clergy. Spenser wistfully looked up to the pure primitive church of the good old days, and in the *Faerie Queene* many of the traits of the golden age are recalled :

When good was only for itself desired,
 And all men sought their own, and none no more ;
 When Justice was not for most meed out-hired,
 But simple truth did reign, and was of all admired.*

Spenser also sings how

—from the golden age, that first was named,
 It's now at carst become a stonie one ;
 And men themselves, the which at first were framed

* *F. Q.*, Proem to Bk. V. St. III.

Of earthly mould, and form'd of flesh and bone,
Are now transformed into hardest stone....*

Spenser's vision of a golden age appears to have made him indifferent to the national ideal of the Elizabethans. Armada patriotism united English people of all denominations and communities, and Queen Elizabeth was looked upon as the symbol of this national unity and of England's glory and expansion.† This feeling is clearly traceable in the writings of most Elizabethan authors. Literary works were freely dedicated to her, and the virtues of the maiden Queen and her benign rule were the frequent themes of poetry and drama. Some critics are of opinion that Spenser too was captivated by the national ideal of Elizabethan England and his literary homage to the Queen—fulsome and flattering at times—was the result. She was his Gloriana who did not actually appear in the poem, his Mercilla whose royal virtues shone so resplendently and his Britomart whose chastity was so unique. The *Faerie Queene* was dedicated to her. Her name was cherished by the poet as it also happened to be the name of his mother as well as of his beloved wife. He celebrated her beauty along with her maiden virtues like many other Elizabethan writers. But Legouis thinks that Spenser's panegyrics of the Queen were conventional. An idealist like him was not likely to enthuse over the conditions prevailing in her court. Corruption in the church, the scandals associated with the Queen's private life and English policy in Ireland must have

* *Ibid.*, St. II.

† Dowden, *Spenser, the Poet and Teacher*.

produced in him feelings of revulsion.* He was in this respect different from Shakespeare, the writer of the English chronicle plays. Burleigh was held responsible for the evils by Spenser, but in Bk. V of the *Faerie Queene* the "Regiment of women" is branded as contrary to the decree of God and the laws of Nature. Spenser is therefore believed by this eminent critic to have painted the Queen not as she really was, but exactly as she liked to be painted; and if this was so, it is doubtful if Spenser was inspired by contemporary patriotism. The problems on the solution of which depended the future of England as one of the great powers of Europe, did not interest the poet who was enraptured with the vision of the golden age. A passionate pride in her past achievements and a full comprehension of her destiny seem to have been outside the scope of his vocation as a poet. These had actually manifested themselves in the Elizabethan chronicle plays. Prof. Selincourt observes, "A critic has noted that from the year of the Armada down to the end of Elizabeth's reign more than a fifth of all the plays whose titles have survived took their subjects from English history. Thirteen of Shakespeare's (more than a third of the whole) are of the sort."† In *King Lear* and *Cymbeline* the interest is other than political; yet even here the Englishman's patriotism is touched on and

* It was in the royal court that Spenser came most in touch with naked realism which repelled his idealistic and sensitive soul. The gulf was wide between his cherished world and the world he saw around him, and his poetry was divided into two classes. Realism became the source of his satires, while idealism inspired his allegories.

† *The English Poets and the National Ideal*, p. 9.

stimulated. In his historical plays Shakespeare deals specifically with political evils and gives his own suggestions for their cure, so that England might be strong and great. But Spenser was unconcerned with them. There is nothing in his writings comparable to John of Gaunt's eulogy of England :

This other Eden, demi-paradise,
 This fortress built by Nature for herself
 Against infection and the hand of war,
 This happy breed of men, this little world,
 This precious stone set in the silver sea.....

or to the stirring lines which close *King John* :

This England never did, nor never shall,
 Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
 But when it first did help to wound itself,—

or to the proud words of Bolingbroke which may have inspired the soldier-poet Rupert Brooke :

Where'er I wander, boast of this I can,
 Though banish'd, yet a true-born Englishman.

Nationalism in Milton takes the form of a plea for civil liberty and liberty of conscience. He "stands for the right to criticise authority and to carry the light of the individual reason and the individual conscience into every sphere of man's activity." Milton's time was different from Spenser's, and the questions of national importance pressing for solution differed vastly in the two ages. Yet it is surprising that the great Elizabethan poet should not have manifested any interest in the ideal of popular liberty which, if anything, was more seriously threatened in its various spheres during the reigns of Mary and Elizabeth.

An allegory is to be differentiated from a symbol which has a real as opposed to an arbitrary existence. "All things beautiful and excellent are symbols of an excellence analogous to them, but ranged higher in Nature's scale. Allegories are abstractions of the understanding and fancy; and it is the especial function of imagination and passion, not by any means to pass by deep thoughts, which are their most strengthening nourishment, but to take them out of the region of the abstract, which is that of science, not of poetry, and present them to our sympathies in the form of the concrete, investing them with life—its breath, its blood, and its motion."^{*} There is delicate and unconscious symbolism in Dante's poetry and in the works of mediæval mystics. But Spenser professedly allegorizes abstract virtues and vices. The personification is awkward, and its artificiality is apparent. As the abstractions are divorced from reality, the allegories are devoid of interest. Lowell points out how they are "too often forced upon us against our will, as people were formerly driven to church till they began to look on a day of rest as a penal institution. The true type of the allegory is the *Odyssey* which we read without suspicion as pure poem, and then find a new pleasure in divining its double meaning, as if we somehow got a better bargain of our author than he meant to give us."[†] Spenser's characters are "too supreme in their beauty, too terrible in their repulsiveness or glory, to be human." They are the product of a

^{*} Aubrey de Vere, *Characteristics of Spenser's Poetry*.

[†] Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol. IV, p. 321.

mind that has been fixed on an imaginary world inhabited by shadowy forms. Study of philosophy and ethics as contrasted with contact with life, has nourished this mind. It should be noted that an allegory need not always be concerned with abstractions. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* is an illustration. While Spenser draws on his scholarship and fancy, Bunyan falls back on his own experience of life which "finds its startling parallel in that of every one of us." His inner realisation inspires the characters in his allegory, while Spenser's aloofness from life and reality fills his poem with shadowy figures. These have a remoteness and an unfamiliar air, but the creations of Bunyan "become things, as clear to the memory as if we had seen them," because Bunyan himself is "the Ulysses of his own prose-epic."*

Spenser's literary ambition also illustrates his idealism. It was shared by his two intimate Cambridge friends, Gabriel Harvey and Edward Kirke, and it aimed at raising the standard of English Literature to the level of French and Italian. The achievements of Petrarch and Du Bellay gave a fresh impetus to it. Italy had not only been foremost in bringing about the revival of ancient culture, but under the leadership of Petrarch, the herald of the Renaissance, had also launched on the task of producing a new and glorious literature. By his celebrated manifesto Du Bellay had invited French writers to borrow from the ancients in order to embellish their own literature and raise it to an honoured position in Europe.

* Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol. IV, pp. 322-23.

Spenser's translation of Du Bellay's *Visions* and *Ruins of Rome* and his sonnet to this distinguished and bold reformer of French language and literature, are significant evidence of his own literary ambition.

His opinion of the contemporary literature of England reflects his dissatisfaction and disgust. Contemporary poetry in his view was nothing but ribaldry and coarse rhyme.* In *The Tears of the Muses* the Muses of Comedy and Tragedy weep over the degeneracy of the stage, while others deplore the decadence of Poetry.

Poetry in Spenser's opinion was "no arte, but a divine gift, and heavenly instinct not to bee gotten by labour and learning but adorned with both and poured into the witte by a certain *enthusiasmos* and celestial inspiration," and he aspired to write noble poetry of this kind "teaching virtue "by processes of delight, morality through ensauple." He identified his personal interest with the cause of virtue and literature, and his desire to rise to fame and to step up to higher social spheres was bound up with his literary idealism.

The English language was held poor by the Latinisers of the age, but their efforts to improve it had not succeeded. Edward Kirke, the commentator on *Shepheards Calender*, thought that they had nothing but contempt for their mother-tongue. Borrowing from French and Italian with which to patch up the holes of English, was also condemned by him. He himself preferred even archaisms to Latinisms, and

* *Shepheards Calender*, Fenth Eclogue.

believed with Spenser that "our mother-tongue of itself is both full enough for prose and stately enough for verse." Hence Spenser's glorification of Chaucer as the "well of English undefyled" and his ambition to uplift the English language and literature by following in the footsteps of his great master. He was in this matter largely influenced by the movement for the revival of all that appertained to the past of England. This was also responsible for the antiquarian tastes which came into vogue in England about this time and, together with Spenser's longing for the far-off and distant, for his archaic diction to some extent.

No great ideal is realisable. The idealist therefore is confronted with never-ending toil and struggle; he sees before him a vista of conflict and grim battle. His life is a long journey the end of which is beyond his ken. It is not for him to enter the promised land of which he may occasionally have only a Pisgah vision. Yet, care-worn and foot-sore, he has to trudge on. The idealist is pensive and gloomy; nonchalant gaiety and care-free mirth are not meant for him. Humour which occasionally casts sunshine on human intercourse, he cannot enjoy. His soul must undergo a stern discipline which alone can give moral strength and courage. Hence we find in Spenser a sage, calm and contemplative poet who shrinks from the gross realism of contemporary life and its drab superficialities. The movement of his verse is slow and reflects his world-weariness. His speculative habits are even responsible for his prolixity and digressions. The contrast with his master is

worth noticing. With Chaucer life is much easier and pleasanter than with Spenser. His folk are not overburdened with any responsibility for high enterprise. They are gay and mirthful, even comic. They jest and laugh, eat and drink. "The world did not much disappoint Chaucer, nor did he find it, on the whole, a bad world to live in."* But to Spenser life was no agreeable jaunt "to Canterbury with merry companions," but a sore and terrible conflict. The strain upon individual will, courage and steadfastness is oppressive, and the lonely adventures and dread encounters with dragons and monsters are symbolic of his conception of arduous spiritual struggle.

* *The Introspection and Outlook of Spenser.*

CHAPTER II

SPENSER AND THE PRE-RAPHAELITES

To mention Spenser and the Pre-Raphaelites in one breath must appear anomalous. It is indeed a far cry from the sixteenth century to the nineteenth, from the Elizabethan period to the Victorian. Literary ideas and tastes must change with the times, and literary influence too cannot be expected to survive very long. Spenser's influence—noticeable in so many of his immediate successors—could not possibly be an exception. Whether the Pre-Raphaelite poets of England did, as a matter of fact, inherit anything from the Elizabethan as Morris did from Chaucer, is a question probably incapable of a satisfactory answer. But Keats was one of his devoted disciples and imitators, and Keats definitely influenced some of the Pre-Raphaelite poets who had unbounded admiration for him. Some of the features of Spenser's poetry might have been transmitted to these nineteenth-century poets through Keats as intermediary.

But there are aspects of Spenser's art and poetry which seem to bear a resemblance to some of those of the Pre-Raphaelite poets. This has not yet attracted much notice, for the points of similarity have been overlaid with the literary characteristics of two widely different epochs, and are not quite apparent. In tracing the resemblance between compositions separated by three centuries, allowances will naturally have to be made for flux of time.

Pre-Raphaelitism in English poetry derived its traits from Pre-Raphaelitism in English painting. In the domain of literature as much as in the domain of art, the movement was a reaction against conventionality. The Pre-Raphaelites thought that the contemporary English school of painters was characterised by conventional optimism, cheap emotions and sentimental ideas. They even found fault with the followers of Hogarth and the great English portrait-painter Reynolds, and insisted upon poetic imagination, faithful delineation, sturdy fidelity and homely simplicity, such as were noticeable in early Italian masters of the mediæval times from Giotto to Leonardo. The emergence of Raphael with his inimitable perfection of technique and sublimity of conception was believed by them to have prejudicially affected the initiative and originality of his successors, and hence Pre-Raphaelitism became their party label. The traditions of the Renaissance schools of art and of contemporary English painters were thus repudiated.

“Back to nature” became the motto of the Brotherhood, though it looked up to the early Italian or Pre-Raphaelite painters for inspiration. Imitation of nature was believed to secure conformity to truth—supposed to have been revealed in early Italian painting—as opposed to conventionality. In his discourse on Pre-Raphaelitism Ruskin says that it has only one principle—that of absolute, uncompromising truth in all that it does. The imitation of nature was to be close and faithful—“down to the minutest details,” in the language of Ruskin.

This meticulous accuracy in Pre-Raphaelite

painting in representing natural objects has attracted pointed attention, and is as important as its serious intention, individuality and freedom from conventionality. Concentration on minutiae which generally elude notice, led the Pre-Raphaelites to build up their "pictures bit by bit* like a mosaic," and finish each piece of the work without retouching, before another was begun. "Instead of aiming at harmony by concentrating colour and working away from a point, they (*i.e.*, the Pre-Raphaelites) developed each individual portion with the same fidelity. The mistake was that colours do not, in a scene as it appears to the eye, stand alone, but are modified by the juxtaposition of other colours. Thus a scene studied with isolated attention to the details is apt to wear a hardness and harshness which do not reproduce the scene as it appears to the eye".† Pre-Raphaelitism has thus meant stiffness and archaic handling as distinct from flowing outlines.

Contrast of colours was another mark of Pre-Raphaelite painting in England, and has also to be traced to mediaeval art as well as to mediaeval life. The mediaeval times delighted in splash of colour which shone forth in ceremonial dress, processions and rituals.‡ Royalty, aristocracy and the church

* Rossetti, however, did not, except in a few of his earliest productions, follow this method.

† Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 21.

‡ " . . . the title Dark Ages, given to the mediaeval centuries, is, respecting art, wholly inapplicable. They were, on the contrary, the bright ages; ours are the dark ones. I do not mean metaphysically, but literally. They were the ages of gold; ours the ages of umbr. . . . Their life was inwoven with white and purple; ours is one seamless stuff of brown." Ruskin, *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, p. 241.

equally delighted in variegated hues, and mediaeval art was influenced by their taste and fancy. Religious in a special sense, Pre-Raphaelite, mediaeval or early Italian art was concerned mostly with church decoration, which often consisted in a reproduction of biblical stories in contrasted, brilliant colours.

English Pre-Raphaelite art is said to have been inspired with a 'passion of the past,' just as Scott's romanticism was, in one sense, based on his love of the Middle Ages. The ground had already been prepared for this passion in England. The Tractarian Movement drew men's minds to mediaeval architecture and mediaeval literature, while the Oxford Movement, besides its services to Catholicism, led to a revival of interest in archaeology. Ruskin directed the attention of the British people to early Italian painting. The sprouts very soon emerged into view. Morris became a lover of old churches and cathedrals in England and France. He furnished his house with mediaeval furniture for the revival of the mediaeval decorative arts, and spent large sums of money in collecting illuminated manuscripts. Woodford Hall where Morris spent his early life, had a self-contained mediaeval system and held old festivals. Once the masque of St. George was presented here with great elaboration. Rossetti painted mediaeval religious pictures like *The Girlhood of Mary Virgin* and the *Ecce Ancilla*, and purely secular mediaeval pictures like *King Arthur's Tomb*, *Sir Galahad*, *Before the Battle*, etc. as well as the whole Dante series. Though Morris did not develop into a painter, his first picture was *Sir Tristram after his illness, in the Garden of*

King Mark's palace. The subjects of the "frescoes" on the walls of the Oxford Union Debating Hall were legends from the Arthurian cycle. Church-windows were designed by Burne-Jones and executed by Morris, who was further interested in tapestry-weaving. Stiffness of outline in Pre-Raphaelite art was also borrowed from mediaeval and earlier monkish drawings and illuminations. This love of mediaevalism had other causes too. Rationalism prevailed in the Victorian age. "Creeds and systems were going more completely into the intellectual melting-pot than ever they had done before in England. Nothing was a very sure refuge for the minds of the younger men—and especially of the younger poets—but the beauty of the visible world as revealed and made enduring in mediaeval art."* In addition, the spirituality of the mediaeval times and of Catholicism served as an anodyne to the materialism of the age.

Pre-Raphaelite painting (like tapestry-weaving) with its love of details, stiffness and simplicity, its love of colour and its passion for the Middle Ages influenced the technique of English poetry in the nineteenth century, which claimed to break away from traditional Victorian poetry dealing with current ideas—political, social, spiritual and moral. This was largely due to the strange and rare phenomenon that the artists themselves were the makers of literature. Rossetti devoted in his youth as much attention to painting as to poetry, and could not easily decide which he should pursue exclusively. Morris had learnt designing, illumination and tapestry-weaving as

* Noyes, *William Morris*, pp. 14-15.

practised in the Middle Ages, and was at the same time a poet. Though a painter, Millais tried his hand at poetry in the journal of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. These are illustrations of the expression of reality through different media. Rossetti was thinking of this when he once said significantly, "If any man has any poetry in him, he should paint, for it has all been said and written, and they have scarcely begun to paint it."*

Spenser was not, like Rossetti or Morris, a painter or a designer himself; yet his poetry reveals some of the features of English Pre-Raphaelite painting and mediaeval tapestry-weaving, *e.g.*, stiffness of outlines, accuracy of details and colour-effects. What made Pre-Raphaelite verse into pictorial poetry also marked out Spenser as a word-painter—the Titian or the Rubens of the poets.

Spenser's interest in the Middle Ages and in mediaeval life may also be compared to that of the Pre-Raphaelites. Spenser was indeed more familiar with the mediaeval epoch than Morris or Rossetti. But its glamour or romance impressed the Pre-Raphaelites as much as Spenser. This was partly the effect of their revulsion against their own times. Spenser knew disappointment in his early youth, his hopes of royal patronage were largely baffled by court intrigue, his quiet and happy life in Ireland was blasted by fate and he saw treachery and ingratitude all around him. From all these unpleasant realities and not only from what was drab and gross, as in the case of the nineteenth-century poets, Spenser

* Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 80.

wanted to escape into an ideal world. This he found in the Middle Ages. Morris escaped into the "Earthly Paradise." Conventions and unpleasant features of contemporary life were supposed to give place there to felicity and freedom. Escapism also accounts for Rossetti's desire for absorption in immediate sensations as much as for his interest in the Middle Ages. The Pre-Raphaelite poets do not all stand on the same footing, and only these two will be considered here.

Morris's love of mediaevalism is obvious. His life has been marked off into periods of designing, dyeing and illumination—the well-known mediaeval crafts.* It is these that definitely influenced his method of composition, and it has been suggested that Morris "never spoke, or apparently thought, of poetry as involving more than the craftsman's qualities: singleness of eye, trained aptitude of hand, and such integrity of mind as would not consciously produce rubbish." Morris himself said, "That talk of inspiration is sheer nonsense....there is no such thing....it is a mere matter of craftsmanship."†

Though the stories of *The Earthly Paradise* were derived from Greek, northern and eastern sources, their setting is mediaeval—for they are told in mediaeval surroundings in the fourteenth century. *The Life and Death of Jason* also, in spite of its classical narrative, has a mediaeval atmosphere.

Rossetti's love of the distant past came out in his translations. His earliest metrical composition was a translation from the German romantic ballad

* Mackail, *Life of Morris*.

† Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 82.

Lenore. Rossetti was fond of terror-romances and ballads of this type early in life. As early as in 1850 he had translated a few lines from *The Roman de la Rose*. Later came his interest in early Italian poetry as evidenced by his *Early Italian Poets*. His translation was always very faithful to the original, and it has been said in one case that "with the slightest change it would be indistinguishable from the work of the archaic Italian poets."* He was seeking that remoteness which lends enchantment. In one of his letters to his brother William, he writes how he has been reading "all manner of old romaunts to pitch upon stunning words for poetry. I have found several, and also derived much enjoyment from the things themselves, some of which are tremendously fine." The original of his poem *The Staff and Scrip* has the background of chivalry. In *Troy Town* the classical subject is overlaid by the spirit of mediaeval Italy. The poem might have been suggested by Botticelli's picture of Aphrodite rising from the sea. Rossetti has rightly been called a Florentine of Dante's age.

Rossetti's mediaevalism has also been called romantic archaism which, because of its indifference to reality, is likened to a dream-atmosphere. His disposition of figures and images is rather fantastic as in a dream. Morris's mediaeval world too was the product of a kind of day-dreaming. Morris was a man of action or a realist with a scheme of social reform, but a reaction came in his literary creation which was completely divorced from reality.

* McGrover, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, p. 229.

The dream-atmosphere in Morris invites comparison with that in Spenser. Morris depicts figures of men and women who wander about silently in "the placidity and restfulness of the mediaeval Golden Age without knowing suffering and sorrow". *The Defence of Guenevere* and *The Haystack in the Floods* are exceptions where reality is recognised. In both there are passion and movement, and both are personal, though the setting is the romantic mediaeval age. But in *The Life and Death of Jason* as well as in *The Earthly Paradise*, the essential breath of life is lacking. Neither Jason nor Medea lives. They move as in a dream, but do not wake into the world of passion and suffering. Though Chaucer was the master of Morris, the former's sense of reality (as well as dramatic skill) was absent from the latter. The defect is prominent in Spenser's romantic allegory too. Development of neither character nor story is noticeable in the *Faerie Queene*, where shadowy figures move about as in a dream. These are lifeless and passionless. "Without the similes, the world of the *Faerie Queene* would be vaguer and more lifeless.... Una's lion and lamb might be in Berlin woolwork; they do not move; or they might have walked out of a Bestiary, where beasts have only moral meanings and fabulous customs."* It is the similes that make amends, with their freshness and images of energy and fighting, for this want of movement. "And he (Spenser) cares to put into these delicate inlaid designs the feeling and humanity that are denied

* Elton, *Modern Studies*, p. 71.

to most of his phantom knights and abstract women."*

There is something lulling and hypnotic in the trailing stanza, which fits in with the dream-atmosphere in Spenser and his languors. Though Morris does not use the Spenserian stanza, the flow of his verse is languid and slow, and it produces almost the same effect as Spenser's.

Tennyson and Swinburne too reveal traces of the archaism or the dream-atmosphere which characterises Morris and Spenser. But there is a difference between the dreamy, archaic and decorative mood to which these poets occasionally gave themselves up and the combination of passion and dream-imagery in Rossetti. Emotional abandon is not a mark of Rossetti. As McGroz says, "Morris's and Swinburne's more sterile languors of musical emptiness were not found in Rossetti's work."†

Love of the Middle Ages meant in the case of both Spenser and Rossetti an indifference to contemporary affairs and to national ideals. Both were unaffected by problems pressing for solution by patriotic Englishmen. Repulsed by court intrigues and jealousy against him, Spenser indeed came to entertain a low opinion of public life and of politicians. But Rossetti had no cause of complaint against these. Of Italian extraction, he was like an exotic plant on English soil, and he just preferred to live in a world of beauty and melody where the murmurs and miseries of human society could not reach him. The contrast

* *Ibid.*, p. 72.

† McGroz, *Dante Gabriel Rossetti*, p. 217.

with two other Pre-Raphaelite poets is worthy of notice. Swinburne too loved colour and sound, and was given to a life of ease and pleasure; yet the cause of liberty found in him an ardent champion, as social service attracted Morris.

Apart from the glamour and romance of the Middle Ages, Spenser was influenced by the dualism in mediaeval theology—the keen contrast between the spirit and the flesh. As a poet, however, he was equally attracted by both. Chastity is set in relief by him against wanton lewdness, but physical beauty is associated with moral excellence as well as with carnal impulse. Thus we find Una, Belphebe and Britomart side by side with Duessa and Acrasia. In Rossetti too there is the same dualism, and beauty is the reflection of sanctity and also the lure of sensuality. Helen (in *Troy Town*) and Jenny are physically as attractive as the Blessed Damozel. Spenser's portrayal of the carnal was also influenced by his acquaintance with pagan mythology and with Ovid in particular, as his appreciation of divine beauty was quickened by the study of Platonic philosophy. Rossetti had the passionate and unstable temper of the southerner. The attraction which the carnal had for him can partly be traced to this as his love of sanctity is traceable to the influence of Catholic theology and Dante. The castigation he received in *The Fleshly School of Poetry* might not have been fully justified, but there were passages in his work which might well provoke it. There is, however, a difference between Spenser and Rossetti in one respect. The sense of terror and evil surrounding the wicked and sinister figures in

the latter is absent from the Elizabethan poet who creates more types of vice. Morris has their blemishes, but not their merits. The episode of Hylas in Morris's *Life and Death of Jason* furnishes a parallel to the wiles of Phaedria and Acrasia. As Alfred Noyes says, "Throughout the whole tale of Jason, as indeed throughout the whole of Morris's work, the writing is deliberately on that lower scale of values. The scene where Jason and Medea fall in love is accordingly possessed with the very spirit of the childlike yet passionate old pagan story."*

Mediaeval dualism of matter and spirit is probably also responsible for a conception of nature which is common to Spenser and Morris. None has any pantheistic leaning. That nature has a soul or breathes a spirit is not their creed. Hence man's feelings and passions do not evoke any sympathetic response from it, and it is never believed to be in tune with them. Actually they conceive it as dead and inert. Their conception is different from Wordsworth's, for example. Rossetti has an outlook which is not so clearly definable as theirs. It is impossible to find in Spenser or Morris a passage comparable to Wordsworthian lines like the following :

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

* Noyes, *William Morris*, p. 61

or,

Through primrose tufts in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trail'd its wreaths ;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

A strict and rigid line of demarcation between nature and man precludes all communion between them, for this depends on similarity and contact. And no human figures or animals intrude into the landscapes of Spenser and Morris—they would have been absolutely out of place in the midst of dead nature. Solitary and lifeless, their landscapes are peculiarly lacking in attraction. The impression of beauty is largely suggested by life and movement and is spiritual in origin.* Descriptions of scenery from which living beings have been excluded, do not really produce in the reader the cheering impression which is an essential element of aesthetic pleasure. Legouis's remark on Spenser's landscapes is very pertinent : " What an immense, deserted country ! how far away and long ago it seems ! For days and days the Knights wander over desolate tracts, riding over hills and dales, champaigns and forests, without meeting with a single living

* In his comment on a passage from the *Odyssey*, which describes how Ulysses landed on a lonely island and went to sleep in a wood, " having covered himself up with dead leaves," Ruskin says, " Nothing can possibly be more intensely possessive of the *facts* than this whole passage ; the sense of utter deadness and emptiness, and frustrate fall in the leaves ; of dormant life in the human body,—the fire, and heroism, and strength of it, lulled under the dead brown hoap, as embers under ashes, and the knitting of interchanged and close strength of living boughs above. But there is no the smallest apparent sense of there being *beauty* elsewhere than in the *human being*." *Modern Painters*, Vol. III, p. 176.

creature.”* Spenser’s description of the lonely region through which Una travelled with the lion illustrates this :

Long she thus traueiled through deserts wyde,
By which she thought her wandring knight shold pas,
Yet never shew of living wight espyde ;
Till that at length she found the troden gras,
In which the tract of peoples footing was,
Under the steepe foot of a mountaine hore :†

Guyon travelled long, without ever seeing any living being, before meeting Mammon :

....long he yode, yet no adventure found,
Which fame of her shrill trompet worthy reedes ;
For still he traveild through wide *wastfull* ground,
That nought but *desert wildernesse* shewed all around.‡

Prof. Elton’s remark on Spenser’s *Garden of Adonis* is very apt in this connection :

“No wind ripples over the beds of flowers, no bees hum about them ; it is like some dim airless pleasance under glass....no curious life patters through the silent undergrowth of Spenser’s enchanted wood.”§

To turn to the Pre-Raphaelites. The lonely and dismal northern region visited by the Argonauts is thus described by Morris :

Most pitiless and stark the winter grew
Meanwhile, beneath a sky of cloudless blue,
And sun that warmed not, till they nigh forgot
The green lush spring, the summer rich and hot,

* *Spenser*, p. 127.

† *F. Q.*, I. iii. x.

‡ *F. Q.*, II. vii. ii.

§ *Modern Studies*, pp. 71-72.

The autumn fragrant with slow-ripening fruit ;
Till each grew listless, dull to the heart's root ;
For day passed day, and yet no change they saw
In the white sparkling plain without a flaw,
No cloud, no change within the sunny sky,
Or in the wind, that rose at noon, to die
Before the sunset, and no change at all
In the drear silence of the dead nightfall.*

On the Edge of Wilderne brings out the dreariness of a lonely region by contrast. The breaking out of the quiet summer dawn on a solitary meadow is thus depicted in another poem :

Far out in the meadows, above the young corn,
The heavy elms wait, and restless and cold
The uneasy wind rises ; the roses are dun ;
Through the long twilight they pray for the dawn,
Round the lone house in the midst of the corn,
Speak but one word to me over the corn,
Over the tender, bow'd locks of the corn.†

Rossetti is here different from Spenser and Morris. His "imagery is always symbolic—even where he was not consciously doing more than present pictures to the imagination." Description is not really his proper province. His poetry has also been called visionary, but he is concerned with ideas rather than with objects, and there is in him a powerful union of fact and imagination. Passion is never absent from his poetry which is charged with intense feeling. Non-human nature is not quite dead in Rossetti

* *The Life and Death of Jason.*

† *Summer Dawn.*

as in Spenser and Morris. Hence silence or loneliness too conveys a message in his poetry and is not oppressive. An English noon is thus described :

The pasture gleams and glooms
 'Neath billowing skies that scatter and amass,
 All round our nest, far as the eye can pass,
 Are golden kingcup-fields with silver edge
 Where the cow-parsley skirts the hawthorn-hedge.
 'Tis visible silence, still as the hour-glass.*

Rossetti is not comparable with Spenser or Morris in respect of lengthy enumerations of the features of lonely wastes or solitary places. Yet the following passages are worth noticing as revealing this characteristic in some measure :

Here dawn today unveiled her magic glass ;
 Here noon now gives the thirst and takes the dew ;
 Till eve bring rest when other good things pass.
 And here the lost hours the lost hours renew
 While I still lead my shadow o'er the grass,
 Nor know, for longing, that which I should do.†

* * * * *

Between Holmscote and Hurstcote
 The river's flecked with foam,
 'Neath shuddering clouds that hang in shrouds
 And lost winds wild for home :
 With infant wailings at the breast,
 With homeless steps astray,
 With wanderings shuddering tow'ards one rest
 On this year's first of May.‡

* *Silent Noon.*

† *Autumn Idleness.*

‡ *Down Stream.*

A feeling for mystery is another aspect of the attitude of Rossetti to nature and human beings. This cannot be said of Morris or other Pre-Raphaelites or of Spenser. Their perception circumscribes their imagination which does not travel beyond the obvious. Spenser is slow, reflective and verbose. Morris too is wordy, though in a smaller measure. Rossetti has almost Shakespearean concentration of thought and, often, of language. Rossetti, again, has a sense of dramatic situation and crisis, which reveals itself even in his short tales and ballads which were mostly based upon "some clearly seen pictorial impression of a dramatic moment." Morris has no such instinct, but he is a master of the narrative form. Spenser can neither invent a story, nor re-tell an old one. These differences are, no doubt, important, but they need not obscure the points of similarity amongst these poets in respect of their attitude to nature.

Life, human and animal, having been excluded from the landscapes of these poets, their intellect has little scope for asserting itself. Hence their visual perception becomes abnormally keen and concentrated, and they take in clear impressions of the minutest details, outlines and boundaries. This is another reason why precise and pointed description is a characteristic of Pre-Raphaelite poetry and Spenserian poetry. They differ from impressionist poetry, where the details are blurred, and which gives only indistinct and vague impressions. In Pre-Raphaelite poetry the outlines of natural objects—of flowers, fruits, trees, houses, turrets and domes—are

too clear and definite. The demands they make on our attention are sometimes oppressive. Just as one likes to avoid the glare of the sun and seek shelter in a shady place, one likes at times vague and general impressions in preference to minutiae in clear outline.

Rossetti's accuracy in depicting details, especially in his earlier work, is remarkable, though they are symbolic. It is traceable to the Pre-Raphaelite creed. But there are lines in Rossetti which are very graphic, though not at all symbolic. A railway journey is thus described :

Strong extreme speed, that the brain hurries with,
Further than trees, and hedges, and green grass
Whitened by distance,—further than small pools
Held among fields and gardens,—further than
Haystacks and wind-mill-sails, and roofs and herds,—
The sea's last margin ceases at the sun.*

The Burden of Nineveh is a good specimen of the Pre-Raphaelite method in Poetry. The following lines may serve as illustration :

The consecrated metals found,
And ivory tablets, underground,
Winged teraphim and creatures crown'd,
When air and daylight filled the mound,
Fell into dust immediately.
And even as these, the images
Of awe and worship,—even as these,—
So, smitten with the sun's increase,
Her glory mouldered and did cease
From immemorial Nineveh.

* *A Trip to Paris and Belgium.*

Attention to isolated details, which is responsible for an impression of stiffness of outlines and harshness is revealed in Spenser's description of the garden where Cymochles was led by the wiles of Phaedria :

No tree whose braunches did not bravely spring ;
 No braunch whereon a fine bird did not sitt ;
 No bird but did her shrill notes sweetly sing ;
 No song but did containe a lovely ditt.
 Trees, braunches, birds, and songs, were framed fit
 For to allure fraile mind to carelesse ease :*

Morris thus portrays the port of Colchis with its background of pasture and hamlets, which the Argonauts saw at a distance from their ship :

-they went betwixt the shores
 Against the ebb, and now full oft espied
 Trim homesteads here and there on either side,
 And fair kine grazing, and much woolly sheep,
 And skin-clad shepherds, roused from mid-day sleep,
 Gazing upon them with scared wondering eyes.

One effect of the concentration of vision on the purely physical aspects of things is, in appropriate cases, the perception of contrast of colours, which is common to Spenser and his nineteenth-century parallels, irrespective of the influence of the Middle Ages. Spenser's hues, as Elton points out, are bright and violent and are drawn from luxury or the crafts. He likes gold and ermine, silver, satin and purple. Strong and gaudy colours are thus associated with Lucifera, the symbol of pride :

* *F. Q.*, II. vi. xiii. See also B. E. C. Davis, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 174.

High above all a cloth of state was spread,
 And a rich throne, as bright as sunny day ;
 On which there sate, most brave embellished
 With royall robes and gorgeous array,
 A mayden Queene that shone as Titans ray,
 In glistring gold and perelesse pretious stone ;
 Yet her bright blazing beautie did assay
 To dim the brightnesse of her glorious throne,
 As envying her selfe, that too exceeding shone :*

But Spenser is eminently sensitive to " varied and mysterious degrees of light and darkness."† He avoids void darkness, though he is not at home in clear and full light. Spenser generally sees things in " a chary half-light," and loves the twilight of morning or evening, star-light mirrored in water, sunlight glancing off it, the light of the dawn, and the full-moon.‡

Rossetti has a fondness for the imagery of fierce still radiance of sunshine, as suggested in the lines :

beyond all depth away
 The heat lies silent at the brink of day.§

This is similar to the impression of the background landscape in several of his pictures like ' Dante's Dream ' which show glimpses of life stilled beneath sunlight. As a contrast, Rossetti also uses the imagery of " wan waters and failing light." Nearly every image in *Without Her* is a vivid picture, typical

* *P. Q.*, I. iv. viii.

† *Modern Studies*, p. 67.

‡ *P. Q.* I. i. xxiv and II. vii. xxix 'Cave of Error and Mammon's 'House of Richesse.' See B. E. C. Davis, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 165.

§ *Sonnet for a Venetian Pastoral*, by Giorgione

of Rossetti's preference for shadowy night or twilight hue, *e.g.*,

What of her glass without her ? The blank grey
There where the pool is blind of the moon's face.
Her dress without her ? The tossed empty space
Of cloud-rack whence the moon has passed away.

In Rossetti colour is sometimes purely decorative, and the effect is just like that of "rich dress or deeply dyed wood in panelled rooms." Often is noticed a "perfumed forlorn loveliness" which is cloying and almost enervating.

Rossetti's *Rose Mary* has a peculiar charm, and the great Beryl scatters variegated hues :

With *shuddering light* 'twas stirred and strewn
Like the *cloud-nest* of the *wading moon* :
Freaked it was as the bubble's ball,
Rainbow-hued through a *misty pall*
Like the *middle light* of the waterfall.

When it is replaced in its wrappings, the wizard music which heralded its disclosure, again comes upon the air, and is represented as an appeal to the eye :

As the globe slid to its *silken gloom*,
Once more a music *rained* through the room ;
Low it *splashed* like a sweet *star-spray*,
And sobbed like tears at the heart of May.
And died as laughter dies away.

Morris was fond of the sunny life of the Middle Ages, as Chaucer was. Variegated hues too appealed to him strikingly, but he had not Rossetti's intensity of perception which noticed subtle shades or Rossetti's imagination which read deep significance into them.

The following lines on the passage of the Symplegades have splendid colour-effects :

Then all men, with their eyes now cleared of brine,
Beheld the *many-coloured rainbow* shine
Over the rocks, and saw it fade away,
And saw the opening cleared of sea and spray,
And saw the *green sea* lap about the feet
Of those *blue hills**

and

. . . . the eyes of Lynceus might
Just now and then behold the deep *blue* shine
Betwixt the scattering of the *silver* brine ;
But sometimes 'twixt the clouds the sun would pass
And show the high rocks *glittering* like to glass,
Quivering†

Ectes thus notices the change of colour on the face of Medea :

And therewithal he gazed at her, and thought
To see the *rosy flush* by such words brought
Across her face ; as in the autumn eve,
Just as the *sun's last half* begins to leave
The shivering world, both east and west are *red*.
But calm and *pale* she turned about her head.

Even human beauty as depicted by Spenser is prominently sensuous, though, following Plato, he tries to identify it with moral excellence or good. The beauty of the human face is the special form of beauty that attracts and overpowers Rossetti's spirit. The earth and things of the earth touch

* *The Life and Death of Jason*, Bk. VI.

† *Ibid.*, Bk. VIII.

him only as accessories to it. But human beauty is not accepted by Rossetti as the final reality; it merely points to the mystery that lies hidden behind and beyond it. Morris has a simpler conception of human beauty, which causes such unrest in the soul. Swinburne too, engrossed as he is with it, wants to go behind Beauty, which he regards as the "soveran shrine" of Melancholy. He is "less seated in the dream-world and more stinging in expression."* Whatever the points of difference amongst them, they all depict human beauty as more or less sensuous. Here is another point of resemblance between Spenser and the Pre-Raphaelite poets.

Apart from the splash of colours, there is a distinct pictorial element in Spenser as in the Pre-Raphaelites. They reproduced copiously what they saw represented on the canvas or in the tapestry. The pictures and images were drawn from their visual memory, and the eye had a large part to play in their formation. Of course, they could not always draw upon their own impressions. But even when they had recourse to imagination, their method was the same, *viz.*, that of word-painting.

Spenser had a splendid opportunity of seeing pictures, tapestries and sculptures in the collection of his patron, the Earl of Leicester. The latter had filled his castles of Kenilworth and Wanstead as well as his London residence with art treasures, and the catalogue of the pictures in his London house has been preserved.† Legouis points out that Sidney's

* O. Elton, *Modern Studies*, p. 212.

† Legouis, *Spenser*, p. 97.

Arcadia is a treasure-house of pictorial effects, and some of its happiest pages reproduce man's artistic creation. The impulse may have come to Spenser from Sidney who was composing *Arcadia* when Spenser first made his acquaintance. The *Shepherds' Calendar*, it is to be noted, written earlier, has none of the pictorial magnificence of the *Faerie Queene*. Though there is no evidence, engravings and tapestries from Arras and Flanders must have found a place in Leicester's collection and attracted Spenser's notice.

Spenser fully utilised his impressions in his great poem. In Castle Joycous pictures* hang against the walls of an 'inner rowme,' and the poet aptly describes their subject-matter, *viz.*, the love of Venus and Adonis in its different stages. The first stage is graphically portrayed in these lines :

—whilst he slept she over him would spred
 Her mantle, colour'd like the starry skyes,
 And her soft arme lay underneath his hed,
 And with ambrosiall kisses bathe his eyes;
 And whilst he bath'd with her two crafty spyes
 She secretly would search each daintie lim,
 And throw into the well sweet Rosemaryes,
 And fragrant violets, and Paunces trim;
 And ever with sweet Nectar she did sprinkle him.

The tapestries which adorn the House of Busirane, the wicked magician, are "a feast for the eyes and a peril for the soul," for all the "strange loves of the mythological gods are there represented." The picture of Neptune and his sea-horses might, it has been

* *F. Q.*, III. i. xxxiv.

suggested, well excite the envy of any painter, and must have been suggested by a painting :

His sea-horses did seeme to snort amayne,
 And from their nosethrilles blow the brynie stream
 That made the sparekling waves to smoke agayne
 And *flame with gold* ; but the *white fomy creame*
 Did shine with *silver* and shoot forth his beam.
 The God, himself, did pensive seeme and sad,
 For privy love his breast empiercèd had,
 Nor ought but dear Bisaltis ay could make him glad.
 And hong adown his head as he did dream.*

Legouis wonders whether Spenser had not before his eyes the picture by Titian or by Correggio of Jove's visit to Danaë, when he wrote the following stanza :

. . . . into a golden showre
 Himselfe he chaung'd, faire Danaë to vew ;
 And through the rooffe of her strong brazen towre
 Did raine into her lap an hony dew ;
 The whiles her foolish garde, that litle knew
 Of such deceit, kept th' yron dore fast bard,
 And watcht that none should enter nor issew ;
 Vaine was the watch, and bootlesse all the ward,
 Whenas the God to Golden hew himselfe transfard.†

Spenser's portraits of Belphebe, Lucifera, and Mercilla may be referred to as illustrations of the painter's method in portraying imaginary persons and ~~scenes~~ ^{scenes}. The stanzas depicting Belphebe give the minutest details of her face, her eyes, her mouth, her looks and smiles, her arms and her dress. "There

* *F. Q.*, III. xi. xli.

† *F. Q.*, III. xi. xxxi.

is scarcely a detail in all those stanzas that could not be expressed by a painter or sculptor, that does not remind us of the portraits or statues of Diana." *

Her yellow lockes, crisp'd like golden wyre,
About her shoulders weren loosely shed,
And, when the winde emongst them did inspyre,
They wav'd like a penon wyde disprede,
And low behinde her backe were scatter'd :
And, whether art it were or heedlesse hap,
As through the flouring forrest rash she fled,
In her rude hairs sweet flowres themselves did lap,
And flourishing fresh leaves and blossomes did enwrap.†

Spenser often gives a whole vision in a single stanza, so that we have in a series of stanzas a rapid succession of scenes, objects or situations which have a kaleidoscopic effect. The pictorial method is followed with equal success by Spenser in his allegories. The wedding of the Thames and the Medway is a good illustration. The rivers are transformed into human beings, either masculine or feminine, and this facilitates graphic portraiture.

Morris's interest in painting too has been transmuted, as it were, into literature. Traces of this transformation are noticeable even in his early work, *The Defence of Guenevere and Other Poems*. Lines like

And every morn I scarce could pray at all,
For Launcelot's *red-golden* hair would play,
Instead of *sunlight*, on the painted wall,
Mingled with dreams of what the priest did say‡

* Logouis, *Spenser*, p. 103.

† *F. Q.*, II. iii. xxx.

‡ *King Arthur's Tomb*.

have an appeal mostly based on colour-effects. Word-pictures are, however, more attractive in *The Life and Death of Jason*. Atalanta is thus portrayed in Book III :

—from Arcadian forests came forth one
 Who like a goddess 'mid the rowers shone,
 Swift-running Atalanta, *golden-haired*,
Grey-eyed, and simple ; with her *white* limbs bared,
 And sandalled feet set firm upon the sand,
 Amid the wondering heroes did she stand
 A very maid—

Argo, as she was fitted out for the voyage, is pictured in the following lines :

Gleaming with *gold*, and *blue*, and *cinnabar*,
 The long new oars beside the rowlocks are,
 The sail *hangs flapping* in the light west wind,
 Nor aught undone can any craftsman find
 From stem to stern—

Rossetti has touches of skilful pictorial art, and it has rightly been remarked that landscape is almost always pictorially conceived by him. The following lines may serve as illustration :

Where the long *cloud*, the long wood's counterpart
 Sheds *doubled darkness* up the labouring hill.

This picture of a flight of starlings is admirable :

Sun-steeped in fire, the homeward pinions sway
 Above the dovecote-tops ;
 And clouds of starlings, ere they rest with day,
 Sink, clamorous like mill-waters, at wild play,
 By turns in every copse :

Each tree heart-deep the wrangling rout receives,
 Save for the whirr within,
 You could not tell the starlings from the *leaves* ;
 Then one great *puff of wings*, and the swarm heaves
 Away with all its din.*

Apart from skill in word-painting, the Pre-Raphaelites are noted for what has been called the tapestry-method. Morris's *Earthly Paradise* has been described as "a tapestry woven of over 42,000 lines of rhymed verse." *The Life and Death of Jason* too is full of examples of tapestry-weaving. Morris, it has been remarked, was not really writing his tales in English verse. "First and last, he was weaving them in tapestry. His lines are thin threads, he cares not how thin. Tennyson might compress twenty or more syllables into an iambic pentameter: Morris very rarely exceeds the ten, and very thin ones at that. He often seems in this regard to be deliberately aiming at an idea directly opposite to that of all other poets, and to be deliberately drawing out his lines to their utmost tenuity."† The thinness of the lines compels the reader to read them syllable by syllable, with the right air of slow and dreamy simplicity. The description of the palace of King Æetes is looked upon as a fine example of Morris's tapestry-method :

The pillars, made the mighty roof to hold,
 The one was silver and the next was gold !
 All down the hall; the roof, of some strange-wood
 Brought over sea, was dyed as red as blood,

* *Sunset Wings*.

† Alfred Noyes, *William Morris*, p. 51.

Set thick with silver flowers, and delight
Of intertwining figures wrought aright.
With richest webs the marble walls were hung,
Picturing sweet stories by the poets sung
From ancient days, so that no wall seemed there,
But rather forests black and meadows fair,
And streets of well built towns, with tumbling seas
About their marble wharves and palaces;
And fearful crags and mountains; and all trod
By changing feet of giant, nymph and God,
Spear-shaking warrior and slim-ankled maid.*

Rossetti's earlier style was marked by simplicity and naïveté of phrase and conception. But this was succeeded by another style which was conspicuous for "gorgeous word-textures, strange tapestries of language and colour."† This appears in the *House of Life* and other later pieces which have been compared to "some gorgeous confection to which a hundred strange exotic products have contributed their scents and savours."‡ The following stanza from the *Bride's Prelude* reveals Rossetti's style of tapestry-weaving with thin lines :—

Although the lattice had dropped loose,
There was no wind; the heat
Being so at rest that Amelotte
Heard far beneath the plunge and float
Of a hound swimming in the moat.

* *The Life and Death of Jason*, Bk. VI.

† Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 83.

‡ Benson, *Rossetti*, p. 84.

Some minutes since, two rooks had toiled
 Home to the nests that crowned
 Ancestral ash-trees. Through the glare
 Beating again, they seemed to tear
 With that thick caw the woof o' the air.

But else, 'twas at the dead of noon
 Absolute silence ; all,
 From the raised bridge and guarded sconce
 To green-clad places of pleasance
 Where the long lake was white with swans.

To cite another illustration of this style :

I gaze until she seems to stir,—
 Until mine eyes almost aver
 That now, even now, the sweet lips part
 To breathe the words of the sweet heart :—
 And yet the earth is over her.

Alas ! even such the thin-drawn ray
 That makes the prison-depths more rude,—
 The drip of water night and day
 Giving a tongue to solitude.
 Yet only this, of love's whole prize,
 Remains ; save what in mournful guise
 Takes counsel with my soul alone,—
 Save what is secret and unknown,
 Below the earth, above the skies.

.. .. .

Only in solemn whispers now
 At night-time these things reach mine ear ;
 When the leaf-shadows at a breath
 Shrink in the road, and all the heath,

Forest and water, far and wide,
 In limpid starlight glorified,
 Lie like the mystery of death.*

In tapestry-weaving these Pre-Raphaelites resemble Spenser to some extent. But Spenser's style is full, wordy and copious, and his lines have not the thinness and brevity noticeable in theirs. Weaving is facilitated by these gossamer-like qualities of verse. Yet Spenser's long lines have a kind of tenuity, and he weaves tapestries with them as skilfully as these nineteenth-century poets, and minute details and variegated hues are well brought out by him. The Seven Deadly Sins are portrayed with an accuracy and clearness which are noticeable only in finished tapestries. Envy is thus depicted :

---malicious Envy rode
 Upon a ravenous wolfe, and still did chaw
 Between his cankred teeth a venomous tode,
 That all the poison ran about his chaw ;

But inwardly he chawed his owne maw
 At neighbours welth, that made him ever sad,
 For death it was, when any good he saw ;
 And wept, that cause of weeping none he had ;
 But when he heard of harme, he waxed wondrous glad.†

Britomart, the symbol of Chastity, stands before the astonished gaze of Artegall in the full glory of her wonanly beauty when her helmet is smashed by his blow. Her figure is rendered life-like in the warp and woof of the following lines of Spenser :

* *The Portrait.*

† *F. Q.*, l. iv. xxx.

---her angels face, unseene afore,
Like to the ruddie morne appeard in sight,
Deawed with silver drops through sweating sore,
But somewhat redder then beseem'd aright,
Through toylesome heate and labour of her weary fight.
And round about the same her yellow heare,
Having through stirring loosd their wonted band,
Like to a golden border did appeare,
Framed in goldsmithes forge with cunning hand :
Yet goldsmithes cunning could not understand
To frame such subtile wire, so shinie clear,
For it did glister like the golden sand,
The which Pactolus with his waters shere,
Throwes forth upon the rivage round about him nere.*

* *P. Q.*, IV. vi. xix-xx

CHAPTER III

KEATS AND SPENSER

When I visited in Piazza di Spagna the house where Keats had taken up his lodgings in Rome during his last illness, I noticed with agreeable surprise that flowers were being sold on the pavement in front of it. It was morning, the sky was cloudless and the bright sun shone on the gorgeous assortment of April flowers in the vendors' stalls. White, violet, yellow, mauve, pink and scarlet provided a veritable feast for the eye. The poet's grave in the Protestant cemetery beside the pyramid of Gaius Cestius later attracted me one afternoon. There I saw pale flowers blossoming around the simple tomb-stone of white marble which covered his mortal remains close by the last resting-place of Shelley. It was in the fitness of things that the memory of Keats should thus have come—accidentally, it may be—to be associated with a type of beauty which fills so large a place in his poetry and was a source of perennial joy to his heart. How strangely apt was his remark made on sick-bed when his life was fast ebbing away—"I feel the flowers growing over me!" Love of sensuous beauty is one of the links between Keats and Spenser. The latter's followers were numerous, but all of them did not imbibe this Spenserian feature.

Keats and Spenser, however, differed in more respects than one. In personal appearance and

temperament Spenser seems to have been the opposite of Keats. We are told that Spenser's portrait in the possession of Lord Kinnoul conveys an idea of delicacy and that his health was as weak as his stature was diminutive. When he was at Cambridge, "in two years he was couched on the sick list five times, no less than sixteen weeks in all."* Keen sensitiveness of body and soul was the consequence of his sickly temperament. Harvey calls him a "great lover of girls who is as greedy of the delights of life as impatient of its roughness." Keats was broad-shouldered and athletic, and his features reminded his friends of the Greek ideal of manly beauty. He looked taller than he really was. Clarke says that he was "compactly made and well-proportioned, . . . active, athletic and enduringly strong." Energy as much as sensibility was writ large on his face which had a peculiarly dauntless expression, and his eyes beamed with a fiery brightness when he had inspiring ideas. His energies were absorbed in games and in manly exercise, not in study. Cowden Clarke says, "He would fight any one—morning, noon and night,—his brother among the rest. It was meat and drink to him." He was on occasion subject to fits of ungovernable passion, and his brother George, being taller and stronger, used to control him by holding him down by main force.

Spenser was a diligent student at Merchant Taylors' School and Cambridge, and developed later into a versatile classical scholar. Keats's boyish indifference to studies was notorious, and he never went beyond the Enfield Grammar School. But he

* Logouis, *Spenser*, p. 3.

was bound apprentice to an apothecary and surgeon at Edmonton when he was only 16 and was not yet aware of his latent poetic genius.

Want generated in Spenser a strong desire for competence and position. A needy scholar, he turned for a career to the church, to noblemen's patronage and to public service. He became a partisan, a sycophant and a courtier by turns to improve his prospects. London and Ireland equally attracted and repelled him. Keats's father, a stable-owner, was rather well-to-do. His children inherited the property of his father-in-law too. Hence Keats did not know poverty in early life. Nor had he to walk up and down another's stairs, to write panegyrics or to fawn and cringe in expectation of patronage. Keats thus escaped, unlike Spenser, the bitterness of soul which issues from the consciousness of merit slighted by mediocrity in high places.

Though Keats's name was unfortunately associated with the cockney school of poetry, the environments of his boyhood and even of his youth were rural, not urban. The natural beauty of the country-side around Enfield and Edmonton had not been impaired in the early part of the nineteenth century by the encroachments of London ten miles away. Though it is easier of access from the city, Edmonton retains its charm even to-day. Spenser's early life was spent in London which undoubtedly was less congested in his time, but was in no sense rural. Cambridge was academic, and only in the north country where he wooed Rosalind and in Ireland could he freely come in touch with nature with its

sights and sounds. But the courtier's life in London with its brilliant pageantry later furnished an unwelcome contrast. Keats had no experience of its stifling effect, and Spenser was more of a Londoner than the poet who was mercilessly slashed as a cockney.

The sudden efflorescence of Keats's poetic genius is unique in the history of literature. Keats's boyish zest for games and boxing developed not into love of poetry but into a fondness for classical mythology, and for books of travel, sea-voyage and heroic adventure. He hardly read any poetry till 1810 when he was fifteen, and did not compose his first poem till his nineteenth year, *i.e.*, the third year after he had left school. This is rather unusual, for great poets have often been the authors of quite creditable performances earlier in life. Spenser himself probably wrote part of his *Visions (of Bellay and of Petrarch)* in his sixteenth year. According to one report, however, Keats as a child had a propensity to rhyming. But he made no attempt at verse-spinning at school. Compared with Spenser's *Visions*, however, Keats's first poem is very remarkable. It was followed in astonishingly quick succession by *Endymion* between April and November, 1817, *Hyperion* in 1818-19 and the great *Odes* between April and September in 1819. If these are the best specimens of Keats's art, the rapidity of its development was extraordinary and, considering the quality and quantity of the output, the period of production was astonishingly short, *viz.*, about three years. There is an interval of ten years between the publications of the *Shepheards Calender* and the first three books of the *Faerie Queene*. The *Amoretti*

came out in 1595, six years after. Keats began rather late, but his powers developed and matured with remarkable rapidity. As one critic says, " . . . there is something tropical and of strange overgrowth in his sudden maturity, but it *was* maturity nevertheless."*

The virulence with which Keats was attacked by adverse critics was as unexpected as the sudden outburst of his poetic genius. The outpourings in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* were grossly personal and foul, and were obviously animated by party spirit. "The wavering apprentice," "the most worthless and affected of all the versifiers of our time," "a young cockney rhymester, dreaming a fantastic dream" were some of the choice expressions showered on the poet. The *Quarterly Review* ignored all the beauties of *Endymion* and gloated over its supposed defects. It called Keats "a copyist of Mr. Hunt," "his simple neophyte." "But," it continued, "he is more unintelligible, almost as rugged, twice as diffuse, and ten times more tiresome and absurd than his prototype." Though Keats did not seem much perturbed and admitted his defects, his friends believed that his sensitive heart was sorely afflicted by the brutal onslaught which accelerated his fatal ailment. Spenser's poetical career was quite different—it was a record of uninterrupted success and respectful appreciation by admirers. He emerged into prominence quite early, having been acquainted with Sidney and his literary friends. Sidney himself rated the *Shepherds Calendar* as one of the few recent examples of poetry worthy to be named after Chaucer,

* Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol. I,

This favourable appreciation really made Spenser famous. In 1586 Webbe in his *Discourse of English Poetry* called him "the rightest English poet that ever I read," and compared him favourably with Virgil and Theocritus. Puttenham in his *Arte of English Poesie* classed Spenser with the illustrious Sidney, and Spenser's name henceforth appeared in every enumeration of English poets. The publication of the first part of the *Faerie Queene* placed Spenser at the head of all living English poets, as the worthy successor of Chaucer. Even Nash, the fierce pamphleteer, hailed him as the 'new laureate.' Veritably "it was roses, roses all the way." Yet Spenser was discontented, and he castigated his age as unfavourable to the growth of poetry.

The dissimilarity between the two poets in respect of surroundings, training, physique and temperament is interesting in view of the resemblance of their poetic sensibility and artistic taste implied by the influence of one on the other. Keats's obligation to Spenser may be grouped under three different heads—diction, imagery and thought. The first two only will be dealt with in this chapter. The obligation can partly be accounted for by the Romantic Revival which was a hearkening back to Elizabethan Literature and was influenced by its close study as model. But in the case of Keats, this did not lead to the direct reproduction of the Elizabethan diction. He began by imitating not the Elizabethans but their imitators, not Spenser but the Spenserians. He followed successively the dictions of Thomson and the eighteenth-century Spenserians, of Leigh Hunt and Felton Mathew, the nineteenth-

century Spenserians, and of Drayton, Fletcher and Browne, the seventeenth-century Spenserians, before approximating to Spenser's style itself. Spenser's influence, whatever its form, was most abundant in the first period of Keats's literary career. Keats later gave up gradually his discipleship to Spenser, which was replaced by his discipleship to Shakespeare, to Milton and to Wordsworth successively.

Though he became a medical apprentice at Edmonton after the midsummer term of 1811, Keats continued his literary studies under the guidance of Clarke, the son of the Master of the Grammar School at Enfield which he revisited frequently. Interest in poetry which had replaced love of books of travel and adventure in Keats, was evidenced by his completing a translation of Virgil's *Æneid* about this time. At Edmonton and Enfield he studied early romantic poets like Thomson and Gray who tried to revive the Elizabethan outlook as well as Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton. Keats is believed to have first read Spenser in October, 1813. The story of his introduction to Spenser's poetry is given by his mentor Clarke :

" . . . he must have given unmistakable tokens of his mental bent ; otherwise at that early stage of his career I never could have read to him the *Epi-thalamion* of Spenser ; and this I remember having done and in that hallowed old arbour, the scene of many bland and graceful associations . . . how often in after times have I heard him quote these lines :

Behold, while she before the altar stands,

Hearing the holy priest that to her speaks . . . ,

That night he took away with him the first volume of the *Fuerie Queene* and he went through it, as I formerly told his noble biographer, 'As a young horse would through a spring meadow—ramping'!" Brown says, "It was the *Fuerie Queene* that awakened his genius," and *Imitation of Spenser* was the outcome early in the beginning of 1814. It was not, however, known to Brown or to anybody else for some time that this was Keats's first poem. The *Sonnet written on the day that Mr. Leigh Hunt left prison* was long believed to have been the firstfruits of Keats's poetic genius. Keats succeeded in reproducing in *Imitation of Spenser* not so much Spenser's diction as its eighteenth-century imitation in Thomson's *Castle of Indolence*, Shenstone's *Schoolmistress* and Beattie's *Minstrel*. But phrases from Spenser and Milton are noticeable in it along with the cadence of Thomson. In the very first stanza of Keats's poem there is this luscious description of murmuring streams flowing through flower-beds, with bowers on their banks:

Now Morning from her orient chamber came,
And her first footsteps touch'd a verdant hill;
Crowning its lawny crest with amber flame,
Silv'ring the untainted gushes of its rill;
Which, pure from mossy beds, did down distil,
And after parting beds of simple flowers,
By many streams a little lake did fill,
Which round its marge reflected woven bowers,
And, in its middle space, a sky that never lowers.

The picture of the dawn in the first line of the stanza may have been suggested by these lines of Spenser:

Now when the rosy fngred Morning faire,
 Weary of aged Tithones saffron bed,
 Had spred her purple robe through dewy aire,
 And the high hills Titan discovered..*

Marge and a little lake in Keats's stanza were probably derived from Spenser's passages on the Bower of Bliss :

Infinitt streames continually did well
 Out of this fountaine, sweet and faire to see,
 The which into an ample laver fell,
 And shortly grew into so great quantitie,
 That like *a little lake* it seemd to bee..†

and

And all the *margent* round about was sett
 With shady Laurell trees..‡

Reminiscences of Milton's *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus* and *Paradise Lost* and of Gray's poems are also noticeable in Keats's *Imitation*. His method is impressionistic and not expository like Spenser's. Keats presents without explanatory transitions a series of flashing images suggested by the description of the Bower of Bliss in the *Faerie Queene*. It is Keats's reminiscences of Spenser and Milton that are revealed in them, and not his own personal experience. Spenser's melody is also partly reproduced by Keats, but his diction is borrowed from eighteenth-century Spenserians like Thomson and is therefore lacking in freshness and spontaneity.

* *P. Q.* I. ii. vii

† *P. Q.* II. xii. lxii.

‡ *P. Q.* II. xii. lxiii.

Keats's sonnets to Byron and Chatterton, his ode to Apollo, sonnet on Peace and address to Hope also reveal the influence of the diction of eighteenth-century Spenserians. These found didacticism and personification in Spenser and Milton. Personifications took the place of the classical deities in the poetry of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Error, Ignaro, Temperance, Truth, Awe, Despair, Pride, etc., are familiar figures in the *Faerie Queene*. "Loath'd Melancholy," "heart-easing Mirth," "brooding Darkness," "deluding Joys," "Peace," "Quiet," etc., are prominent in *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*. Spenser's didacticism was different from profound moral reflections in Elizabethans like Shakespeare. The following are apt illustrations from Bk. I of the *Faerie Queene* :

Vertue gives her selfe light through darknesse for to
wade*

.. .. .

O, how can beautie maister the most strong,
And simple truth subdue avenging wrong ! †

.. .. .

Ay me ! how many perils doe enfold
The righteous man, to make him daily fall,
Were not that heavenly grace doth him uphold,
And stedfast truth acquite him out of all.‡

The eighteenth-century imitators of the Renaissance masters indulged in didacticism like the latter

* l. xii.

† iii. vi.

‡ viii. i.

and also used personified abstractions, resounding epithets, periphrases and stock phrases. "Soft Pity" in Keats's sonnet to Byron and "Genius mildly flashed" in his sonnet to Chatterton are reminiscent of the imitative eighteenth-century diction. In the sonnet on Peace, Keats deifies and apostrophizes Peace in the manner of Gray and Collins who were indebted to Spenser and to Milton for the use of abstractions. Though Campbell belonged mostly to the nineteenth century, he could not outgrow the style of the eighteenth. He was partly a disciple of Spenser, and wrote *Gertrude of Wyoming* in Spenserian stanzas. It was his *Pleasures of Hope* that suggested Keats's *To Hope* in which were introduced personifications like Liberty, Despair, Despondency and Hope. Moral reflection appears in the refrain:

Sweet Hope! ethereal balm upon me shed,
And wave thy silver pinions o'er my head.

Side by side with such traces of the eighteenth-century poetic style, there are, in these poems of Keats, typical Elizabethan phrases and expressions, and the result is a curious amalgam somewhat similar to that in *Imitation of Spenser*. "Woven boughs" in the second stanza of *To Hope* like "woven bowers" in *Imitation of Spenser* takes the mind back to Spenser's "boughes and arbours woven cunningly." "Golden moon doth veil," "amber rays," and "sable marble"* are redolent of the Elizabethan literary tradition. The verse "To sigh out sonnets to the

* Sonnet to Byron. See also B. E. C. Davis, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 157.

midnight air " in the fifth stanza, reminds the reader of Shakespeare's lines :

....the lover,
Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad
Made to his mistress' eye-brow.

and similar passages in other Elizabethan writers. "Amate" and "ingrate world" in Keats's sonnet to Chatterton have a tinge of Elizabethan archaism.

Sonorous poetry was the fashion of the eighteenth century, as it was believed to be capable, like music, of inspiring passions by means of appropriate sounds. Dryden's *Alexander's Feast* was its model. Dryden, it has been remarked, had established the diction of the ode as a string of resonant words, and "Gray, ransacking Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton,increased the store of resounding phrases."* Keats follows Dryden and Gray in his *Ode to Apollo*. The source of such phrases in this poem as "laurell'd peers," "western splendour," "melodious swells" etc., is Elizabethan. Keats cannot forget Shakespeare and Spenser in his *Ode* :

Thou biddest Shakespeare wave his hand,
And quickly forward spring
The Passions—a terrific band—

The music of Spenser's poetry is also referred to :

A *silver trumpet* Spenser blows,
And, as its martial notes to silence flee,
From a virgin chorus flows
A hymn in praise of spotless Chastity.

* Finney, *Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 63.

The influences of Mathew and Hunt next mark Keats' output. When residing at Edmonton, Keats often visited London where his brother George was living, and formed a friendship with Felton Mathew, a cockney poetaster, and read with him contemporary poets of the eighteenth-century school like Campbell, Moore, Byron and Leigh Hunt, as he had read Renaissance poets and Thomson and Gray with Clarke. Mathew was the first poet Keats met, and their association marked the beginning of the sentimental phase of Keats's poetry, for Mathew was a sentimental, romantic young man conservative in politics and orthodox in religion. In Mathew's coterie Keats imitated contemporary amorous and sentimental poets. "Fill for me a brimming bowl" is an example.

Keats's friendship with Mathew was brief. It lasted only during 1814-15 and was followed by Keats's increasing admiration for Hunt. Keats had come to know first of Hunt and his *Juvenilia* earlier through Clarke at Edmonton. Of the nineteenth-century imitators of Spenser, Hunt and Mrs. Tighe were the most prominent. Both influenced Keats's poetical work at Edmonton. Hunt had formed his diction in *Juvenilia* (published in 1801) largely on the model of eighteenth-century Spenserians like Thomson, Shenstone, Gray and others. Hence his early influence on Keats meant really the impress of eighteenth-century Spenserians. So far as Keats was concerned, even the blaze of his popularity as a politician could not dim Hunt's merit as a lover of literature. Keats's sonnet written on the day (February 3, 1815) when

Leigh Hunt left prison is his homage to the student and imitator of Spenser :

In *Spenser's halls* he stray'd, and bowers fair,
Culling enchanted flowers ; and he flew
With daring Milton through the fields of air :
To regions of his own his genius true
Took happy flights.

From 1810 to 1816 Hunt's style changed and, along with this, Keats's too. The *Feast of the Poets* published in 1811 first gave an indication of this change. Though Hunt continued his homage to Spenser, he turned for imitation from eighteenth-century Spenserians like Thomson, Beattie and Shenstone to seventeenth-century Spenserians like Drayton, John Fletcher and William Browne. The *Story of Rimini* published in February, 1816, confirmed the indication of the *Feast of the Poets*. The following elements entered into Hunt's new style : natural imagery, elementary emotions, the conversational diction of Wordsworth to whom Hunt was now attracted, the Arcadian pastoral conventions of Spenser and the seventeenth-century Spenserians, the sensuousness of Spenser and his chivalric note.* In October, 1816, after Keats had taken up his residence in London, Clarke introduced him to Hunt, now grown famous, and Keats became a professed disciple of his. All his poems written after this date bore traces of Hunt's new style. Keats's *Epistle to George Felton Mathew* was specially influenced by it in respect of its versi-

* Finney, *Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 72.

fication. This was the first poem that Keats composed in loose, flowing heroic couplets. His earlier poems had followed the metres of the eighteenth-century imitative poetry. The valentine *Hadst thou lived in days of old* written by Keats for his brother George (to be given to Mary Frogley) in February, 1816, derived its style and substance largely from seventeenth-century Spenserians who were fanciful as well as artificial. The conceit

At least for ever, evermore,
Will I call the Graces four

was borrowed from Spenser's *Shepherds Calender* for April. But the substance of the second part of the poem was largely derived from the *Faerie Queene*. Keats suggested that Miss Frogley in the chivalric age would have been Britomart, the Knight of Chastity, who rescued Amoret from the spell and custody of Busirane the Enchanter. The sonnet "To...." beginning with "Had I a man's fair form, then might my sighs", also shows the influence of the pastoral and chivalric poetry of seventeenth-century Spenserians.

Though Keats had been deliberately following Hunt's new style since taking up his residence in London, its constituent elements were not always equally prominent in his work. His *Epistles* to George and Cowden Clarke are specially marked by the conversational and simple diction which Hunt learnt from Wordsworth. Keats used in these a larger number of Hunt's characteristic and colloquial words than he had done in the *Induction* and *Culidore*. The

same scene is described in the *Epistle to my Brother George* and in the sonnet *To my Brother George*. But the style is natural in the first, and crude or artificial in the second where it is enriched with fancies and reflections and where the impress of seventeenth-century poets like Spenser and Shakespeare is clear. It is easy to perceive the distinction between

E'en now I'm pillow'd on a bed of flowers
That crowns a lofty cliff, which proudly towers
Above the ocean-waves. The stalks, and blades,
Chequer my tablet with their quivering shades.
On one side is a field of drooping oats,
Through which the poppies show their scarlet coats ;
So pert and useless, that they bring to mind
The scarlet coats that pester human-kind
And on the other side, outspread, is seen,
Ocean's blue mantle streak'd with purple and green.
Now 'tis I see a canvass'd ship, and now
Mark the bright silver curling round her prow.*
and

Many the wonders I this day have seen :

The sun, when first he kist away the tears
That fill'd the eyes of morn ;—the laurel'd peers
Who from the feathery gold of evening lean ;—
The ocean with its vastness, its blue green,
Its ships, its rocks, its caves, its hopes, its fears,—
Its voice mysterious, which whoso hears
Must think on what will be, and what has been.†

The *Story of Rimini* also embodies Hunt's ideal

* *Epistle to my Brother George*.

† *Sonnet To my Brother George*.

of the short tale of chivalry. *Specimen of an Induction to a Poem* and the fragment *Calidore* reveal Keats's love of the Spenserian romance. But neither is really a lengthy romance in the manner of Spenser. Possibly Keats suffered from Hunt's influence which was in favour of short tales. In spite of the attraction of the three images, the dancing white plume, the lance "pointing slantingly athwart the morning air," and the knight reining in his proud steed, the *Induction* does not develop into a story, but ends in an invocation to Spenser, the god of chivalry :

Spenser ! thy brows are arched, open kind,
And come like a clear sunrise to my mind ;
And always does my heart with pleasure dance,
When I think on thy noble countenance :

Spenser's follower Hunt is here mentioned as *Libertas*. *Calidore* was suggested by the Legend of Courtesy in Bk. VI of the *Faerie Queene* and reveals, more than the *Induction*, the direct influence of Spenser, though, in consequence of Hunt's influence, it becomes a mere fragment in place of the long romance of chivalry which it was in Spenser.

In Hunt the primary feelings of the Lake poet were not always present in an unalloyed state, while the emotional qualities of Spenser were transformed into a sweet sentimentality, for he lacked Spenser's nobility. In Keats's *Calidore* and *Induction* the pictorial qualities of Spenser were indeed preserved, but Hunt's sentimental adaptation of Spenser's chivalry crept in along with his colloquial phrases and favourite words.

Though he was trying to imitate Spenser and the seventeenth-century Spenserians under Hunt's influence as well as independently, Keats was also reading Wordsworth along with Shakespeare and Milton in the summer of 1816. A mixture of two styles – natural and artificial, simple and ornate (or Renaissance) – is noticeable in his composition at Margate where Keats came after his medical examination in July, 1816. Some poems written about 1817 bear traces of Keats's intensive study of Renaissance poets, especially Spenser and Shakespeare. They reproduced more fully that erudite (as distinct from simple and natural) style which, along with Platonic idealism borrowed from Spenser as well as from Shelley, was the foundation of *Endymion*, the lengthy romance in the Spenserian manner which differed from the type of short poems or tales he had hitherto written under Hunt's influence.

Hunt's aim was to bring back into use the earlier form of the rhymed decasyllabic or heroic couplet which had been dropped by reformers like Wordsworth and Coleridge. Of those who still used it, "Campbell, Rogers, Crabbe and Byron adhered, each in his manner, to the isolated couplet and hammering rhymes with which the English ear had been for more than a century exclusively familiar."* Hunt held that Dryden was really the master of the true heroic couplet, and that Pope had spoilt it. His attempt at reformation resulted in an odd blending of the "grave and the colloquial cadences of Dryden, without his charac-

* Colvin, *Keats*, p. 27 (E. M. L. Series).

teristic nerve and energy ” and without his redeeming features like the triplet, the Alexandrine and disyllabic rhymes. As regards rhythm and sentiment, the *Epistles* of Keats are very much in Hunt’s manner as revealed in the *Story of Rimini*. But it is possible that the rhythmical form of *Endymion* and the *Epistles* may have been due to Keats’s familiarity with disyllabic rhyme and the ‘ overflow ’ in Spenser’s *Mother Hubbard’s Tale* and in Browne’s *Britannia’s Pastorals*. But these had influenced Hunt too.

Keats’s gradual adoption of the Elizabethan, the Renaissance or the grand style in preference to Hunt’s familiar and natural style, was due to many causes. Keats had met Shelley in Hunt’s cottage on Hampstead Heath in December, 1816, but, though impressed by his discourses on Plato, had not taken kindly to him. He came to look upon him and his friend Hunt as rank atheists. In the meantime Keats became an admirer of Haydon whose article concerning the genuineness of the Elgin marbles had attracted his attention. He wrote a sonnet to Haydon and visited his studio where he saw sketches and casts of the Elgin marbles. After the extravagant episode of the wearing of the laurel-crowns by Hunt and Keats, Haydon, along with Reynolds, exhorted Keats to withdraw from Hunt’s coterie. He took him and Reynolds to the British Museum to show them the Elgin marbles, and explained their superb excellence. “ With his enthusiasm for the Bible, Greek sculpture, Shakspere’s plays, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Haydon inspired Keats with an understanding of the grand style of the heroic art of the past. He painted

huge historical pictures in the grand style and encouraged Keats to undertake the composition of a great poem, a romance or an epic.”* The outcome of Haydon’s efforts was the gradual liberation of Keats from the influence of Hunt’s familiar style, and this was heralded in his sonnet *On Seeing the Elgin Marbles* :

Such dim-conceived glories of the brain
Bring round the heart an undescribable feud ;
So do these wonders a most dizzy pain,
That mingles Grecian grandeur with the rude
Wasting of old Time—with a billowy main—
A sun—a shadow of a magnitude.

Parallel almost to the rejection of Hunt’s poetic ideal by Keats was his censure of the baneful influence of the classical school of Pope. This, according to one critic, is symbolised in the enticement of Glaucus by Circe in Book III of *Endymion*. Keats had been influenced by Hunt himself in his adverse criticism of Pope and his enthusiastic appreciation of Wordsworth, and this was one of the reasons why *Endymion* provoked the abuse and ridicule of the *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly*. Referring to the heroic couplet of Pope and his followers, Keats wrote in *Sleep and Poetry* :

With a puling infant’s force
They sway’d about upon a rocking horse,
And thought it Pegasus.

The school of Wordsworth which saw a new beauty in Nature and which promised further liberation

* Finney, *Evolution of Keats’s Poetry*, p. 184.

of the Muse of Poetry, received this tribute from Keats :

Now 'tis a fairer season ; ye have breathed
Rich benedictions o'er us ; ye have wreathed
Fresh garlands : for sweet music has been heard
In many places ;—some has been upstirr'd
From out its crystal dwelling in a lake,
By a swan's ebon bill ; from a thick brake,
Nested and quiet in a valley mild,
Bubbles a pipe ; fine sounds are floating wild
About the earth.

When Keats came to the Isle of Wight in April, 1817, he brought with him some of the works of Spenser and Shakespeare. Apparently his object was to have leisure and quiet for close study and rapid composition. He might also have sought to avoid Hunt's influence. But the atmosphere of Carisbrooke depressed his spirits, and he ran away to Margate after he had begun *Endymion*. Like the *Faerie Queene* and *Britannia's Pastorals* which were Keats's chief models, *Endymion* is " a little region to wander in " in which the imagery is so copious as almost to conceal the thread of the story. That a change had come over Keats's conception of poetic diction, which made him adopt the Renaissance style, is apparent from his observations in his letters, though these may also be regarded as a subsequent justification of his instinctive choice of a new style. In his essay *On Keats* in " *Richard Duke of York* " Keats discussed the qualities of Shakespeare's poetry. Of the three types of it—the poetry of historical fact, the poetry of

human affections and passions and the poetry of romance—Keats preferred the last which was neither realistic nor humanistic. “The poetry of *Romeo and Juliet*, of *Hamlet*, of *Macbeth* is the poetry of Shakespeare’s soul—full of love and divine romance. It knows no stop in its delight, but ‘goeth where it listeth’—remaining, however, in all men’s hearts a perpetual and golden dream. The poetry of *Lear*, *Othello*, *Cymbeline*, etc., is the poetry of human passions and affections, made almost ethereal by the power of the poet. Again, the poetry of *Richard*, *John* and the *Henries* is the blending of the imaginative with the historical: it is poetry: but often-times poetry wandering on the London road.” The romantic style of Keats was marked by the use of words copiously borrowed from Elizabethans like Spenser. He had not yet adopted the simple and suggestive poetic diction of Wordsworth. But he could not, all on a sudden, free himself from the influence of his previous colloquial diction borrowed from Hunt, and hence *Endymion*, notwithstanding its obvious excellences, is an incongruous mixture of the erudite and the colloquial, the elevated and the common.

There are, according to Keats, three characteristics of the romantic style of poetry—excess, intensity and spontaneity. These were believed by him to have been the attributes of Renaissance poetry in general. Though *King Lear* was not classed by him as romantic poetry, the *intensity* of passion of *Lear*—his “seeded pride,” self-will and wrath—was noted in his copy of the play in an annotation on a sentence spoken by Goneril. In a note on a passage

from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (II. ii. 23-28) Keats observed, "There is something exquisitely *rich and luxurious* in Titania's saying 'since the middle summer's spring' as if bowers were not *exuberant* and covert enough for fairy sports until their second sprouting—which is surely the most *bounteous overwhelming* of all Nature's goodnesses."*

Again, he writes to Taylor, "First I think Poetry should surprise by a fine *excess* and not by singularity—it should strike the Reader as a wording of his own highest thoughts, and appear almost a Remembrancer." For "excess" in his poetry Keats was greatly indebted to Spenser.

Keats's genius which had peered first through his imitations and borrowings in *On first looking into Chapman's Homer* gradually revealed itself more fully after the composition of *Endymion*, and the influence of the Renaissance masters weakened in proportion. *The Pot of Basil* written in the spring of 1818 has the sentimentality of Hunt, and the copiousness of imagery of the Renaissance poets. Yet there are several concise phrases and a clearness of outline, which are Keats's original contribution. *The Eve of St. Agnes* has the quintessence of Spenser's sensuousness as manifested in the picture of the Bower of Bliss, together with "the electric passion" of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. But the prominence of "the images of the intimately physical sensations of touch, temperature, pressure, taste, and smell, and the internal sensations,"† brings out the genius of Keats.

* Finney. *Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 245.

† *Ibid.*, p. 548. See also H. W. Garrod, *Keats*, p. 53.

The background of bitter cold, raging tempest, passionate hatred, drunken revelry, devotion and mediaeval penance heightens the effect. Its gloom might have been partly suggested by Keats's own experience of life--his love of Fanny and its enveloping atmosphere of frustration. *La belle dame sans merci* owes something indeed to Spenser's episode of Cymochles and Phaedria, but it is far more weird and sinister than anything in Spenser. Its style too has the magic which was a special feature of romantic genius in the nineteenth century, as revealed, for example, in Coleridge's *Christabel*. In *La belle dame* is reflected, more than in *St. Agnes*, Keats's bitter experience of the attraction of Fanny. In the *Ode to a Nightingale* the forest is more leafy, more verdant and richer in its appeal to sense than Spenser's Garden of Adonis. But it is also more sombre and sadder. The mood of sorrow through which Keats views the scene, makes its beauty more intensely poignant.

It will be seen that Keats was long an eclectic in respect of his style. He absorbed and imitated whatever style he liked and often combined more styles than one. His study of different genres of poetry at Enfield in early youth under the direction of Clarke, is interesting in this connection. The *Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke* thus refers to the matter :

....you first taught me all the sweets of song :
The grand, the sweet, the terse, the free, the fine ;
What swell'd with pathos, and what right divine :
Spenserian vowels that elope with ease,
And float along like birds o'er summer seas ;

"Miltonian storms, and more, Miltonian tenderness ;
Michael in arms, and more, meek Eve's fair slenderness.

Spenser, as already pointed out, was an eclectic in his thoughts and ideas. There is, however, this difference between the two poets that while Keats succeeded at last in evolving a style of his own, Spenser never developed an independent philosophy.*

Keats and Spenser were both rebels against conventionality in poetry. But Spenser had to fight alone for its overthrow. Keats had comrades in arms, for he was in the rank of the Romantic poets whose object was to break the old fetters of frigidity and to make poetry "simple, sensuous and passionate." Spenser was largely imitated, and left his stamp on generations of poets. Keats, himself a follower of Spenser's diction, influenced the style of Tennyson and the Pre-Raphaelites. Wordsworth impressed most the ideas of his successors, Keats their form.

Spenser was a word-painter and a singer. His moral teachings are quite distinct from his colour effects and his melody, and are like so many pegs on which to hang these. "With him the meaning does not so often modulate the music of the verse as the music makes great part of the meaning and leads the thought along its pleasant paths." But Keats's poetry is not analysable into separate ingredients or component elements. Keats was, as Lowell says, "altogether poet." His whole being identified itself with the momentary object of his sense-experience, and he felt it as part of himself.

* But see Davis, *Edmund Spenser*, p. 211. See also Garrod, *Keats*, p. 65.

Poetry was his "very existence, not merely his employment" as in the case of Wordsworth, or a means of imparting moral truth as in the case of Spenser. "Every one of Keats's poems," it has been remarked, "was a sacrifice of vitality; a virtue went away from him into every one of them."

Keats had greater power of poetic expression than Spenser or any other modern English poet. This depends not merely on vividness of portrayal, but also on "the right feeling which heightens or subdues a passage or a whole poem to the proper tone, and gives entireness to the effect." Keats's instinct for fine words was unerring, and it was the product of many factors—identification of self with his experience, delicate sensibility, keen discernment and sense of rhythm. He is said to have "rediscovered the delight and wonder that lay enchanted" in common words. "The thought or feeling a thousand times repeated becomes his at last who utters it best. This power of language is veiled in the old legends which make the invisible powers the servants of some word."* Choice and apt expressions abound in Keats's later work, especially in the *Odes* and *Hyperion*, and Keats is quoted more frequently than Spenser. There is nothing in Spenser comparable to Keatsian lines like

Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on;
Not to the sensual ear, but, more endear'd,
Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone :

* Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol. I, p. 245.

or,

'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

or,

It keeps eternal whisperings around
Desolate shores.

"No poet," says Lowell, "is so splendidly superfluous as he (Spenser),—none knows so well that in poetry enough is not only not so good as a feast, but is a beggarly parsimony. He spends himself in a careless abundance only to be justified by incomes of immortal youth." Abundance and luxuriance in Spenser find expression in the very structure of his verse which trails along. This literary characteristic marked Keats too, but he followed the Renaissance style only so long as he owed allegiance to Spenser. Keats was, according to Lowell, "overlanguaged at first"; but "in this was implied the possibility of falling back to the perfect mean of diction,"* which was attained in his *Odes*.

Spenser "does not love the concise," and "his natural tendency is to shun whatever is sharp and abrupt." This characteristic is the basis of his expository style. Keats too indulges in philosophic discussion at times, but he does not strike one as a moral teacher, as Spenser does. His disquisitions too have not the air of being dragged in or borrowed.

"Reverie" has been noted as the prime quality of Spenser's composition. "And to read him puts one in the condition of reverie, a state of mind in

* Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol. I, p. 241.

which our thoughts and minds float motionless." The same remark may be made on Keats's early work. The reveries of the shepherd prince fill many a page of *Endymion* and reflect the poetic mood of Keats himself. Endymion says :

Oftener, heavily,
When love-lorn hours had left me less a child,
I sat contemplating the figures wild
Of o'erhead clouds melting the mirror through.

Death and mutability were the two common subjects of reflection in Renaissance poetry. The Renaissance poets had a keen sense of beauty, but they also realised its ephemeral character. Spenser wrote the *Cantos of Mutabilitie* and Shakespeare his *Sonnets*. The feeling of transitoriness of life which withers and fades away like a rose, inspires the Spenserian lines :—

Ah ! see, whoso fayre thing doest faine to see,
In springing flowre the image of thy day....
So passeth, in the passing of a day,
Of mortall life the leafe, the bud, the flowre,
No more doth florish after first decay.—*

Keats, unlike Spenser, did not at first feel gloomy at the shortness of life and its inevitable end. He however, changed his view, later on when he had tasted the bitterness of life and felt its tragedy. In *Sleep and Poetry* Keats looked upon evanescence as an impediment to the fulfilment of his desire for immortality as a poet :

Stop and consider ! life is but a day ;
A fragile dewdrop on its perilous way

* *P. Q.*, II. xii. lxxiv-lxxv.

From a tree's summit ; a poor Indian's sleep
While his boat hastens to the monstrous steep
Of Montmorenci.

Hence he cried :

O for ten years, that I may overwhelm
Myself in poesy ; so I may do the deed
That my own soul has to itself decreed.
Then will I pass the countries that I see
In long perspective, and continually
Taste their pure fountains.

It has been remarked that Keats "is definitely earthy and arboreal....rather than ethereal." He differs along with Spenser from Shelley who is aerial, and buoyant in his lyric flight. Keats smells of the earth, as it were, and his poetry is the "poetry of vegetation and greenth," "of strange jungly overgrowths, of murmurous pines and drowsy hemlocks." It feels the breath of organic nature and reflects its varied appeal to the senses. Spenser resembles Keats here, though he does not go to extremes like the latter. His sensitiveness does not border on the morbid as Keats's does. Lusciousness is not so prominent in the Elizabethan poet as in the Georgian. For purposes of comparison reference may be made to two passages from the two poets on almost identical themes. The following is the description of the bower where Adonis lay asleep in *Endymion* :

Above his head,
Four lily stalks did their white honours wed
To make a coronal ; and round him grew
All tendrils green, of every bloom and hue,

Together intertwined and trammelled fresh :
 The vine of glossy sprout ; the ivy mesh,
 Shading its Ethiop berries ; and woodbine,
 Of velvet leaves and bugle-blooms divine ;
 Convolvulus in streaked vases flush ;
 The creeper, mellowing for an autumn blush ;
 And virgin's bower, trailing airily ;
 With others of the sisterhood.

This is modelled on Spenser's picture of the bower in the Garden of Adonis in Canto VI of Bk. III of the *Faerie Queene*, where Venus used to meet her beloved :

There was a pleasaunt Arber, not by art
 But of the trees owne inclination made,
 Which knitting their raucke braunches, part to part,
 With wanton yvie twine entrayld athwart,
 And Eglantine and Caprifole emong,
 Fashiond above within their inmost part,

..
 And all about grew every sort of flowre,
 To which sad lovers were transformde of yore ;
 Fresh Hyacinthus, Phoebus paramoure
 And dearest love ;
 Foolish Narcisse, that likes the watry shore ;
 Sad Amaranthus, made a flowre but late,
 Sad Amaranthus, in whose purple gore
 Me seemes I see Amintas wretched fate,
 To whom sweet Poets verse hath given endlesse date.

In one sense Keats has here been able to improve upon his master.

Keats influenced the Pre-Raphaelites, and their colour-effects had partly been anticipated in his

sensuousness. He derived this not merely from nature, from the hues of flowers and the tints of leaves and plants but also, like Spenser, from paintings. Just as the latter had an opportunity of seeing masterpieces of painting in Lord Leicester's London residence,* Keats was invited to Haydon's studio with its priceless art treasures. Presumably he also visited public art galleries. It is known that he came to the British Museum with Haydon to see the Elgin marbles. Keats's poetry may be "the poetry of greeneth," as it has sometimes been called, but it is also, like the work of Spenser and of the Pre-Raphaelites, pictorial poetry. It is full of images which are either traceable to paintings or which could fittingly be reproduced on the canvas with the brush.

Keats's love of painting is reflected in his description of Hunt's study in *Sleep and Poetry*. Keats was inspired to write this poem one night in the study itself after a symposium with Hunt. The walls were adorned with prints of famous pictures and busts of poets and patriots of old, and Keats surveyed them with evident delight. The poem was actually composed on the next day. The prints have been identified by Sir Sidney Colvin† as prints of Raphael's *Poetry* from the Vatican of Rome, Poussin's *Empire of Flora*, *Bacchanals* and *Venus and Adonis*, and Stothard's *Bathers*, *Vintage* and *Petrarch and Laura*. A few lines may be quoted to illustrate Keats's debt to the pictorial art :

* See Chap. II.

† *John Keats*, p. 54.

....there rose to view a fane
 Of liny marbles, and thereto a train
 Of nymphs approaching fairly o'er the sward :
 One, loveliest, holding her white hand toward
 The dazzling sunrise : two sisters sweet
 Bending their graceful figures till they meet
 Over the trippings of a little child :
 And some are hearing, eagerly, the wild
 Thrilling liquidity of dewy piping.
 See, in another picture, nymphs are wiping
 Cherishingly Diana's timorous limbs ; -
 A fold of lawny mantle dabbling swims
 At the bath's edge, and keeps a gentle motion
 With the subsiding crystal : as when ocean
 Heaves calmly its broad swelling smoothness o'er
 Its rocky marge, and balances once more
 The patient weeds ; that now unshent by foam
 Feel all about their undulating home.
 Sappho's meek head was there half smiling down
 At nothing ; just as though the earnest frown
 Of over thinking had that moment gone
 From off her brow, and left her all alone.

.. .. .
 Petrarch, outstepping from the shady green,
 Starts at the sight of Laura ; nor can wean
 His eyes from her sweet face. Most happy they !
 For over them was seen a free display
 Of out-spread wings, and from between them shone
 The face of Poesy : from off her throne
 She overlook'd things that I scarce could tell.

There is a parallelism between this type of composition by Keats and countless stanzas of the *Faerie*

Queene inspired by paintings or tapestries. Legouis observes : " Spenser hangs many a tapestry or picture round the walls of the palaces he erected in his master-poem and complacently describes the subjects therein represented. . . . Still richer are the tapestries." * Spenser's portrayal of Neptune and Belphœbe and his representation of the love affairs of mythological gods in Bk. III of the *Faerie Queene* are apt illustrations of his pictorial method. Here are to be noticed the same contrast of colours and the same love of graphic description as in Keats's work.

Keats loves the *sculptural*. " Each image is thrown up rounded and whole as a physical creation, with subjective interpretations lending depth." † The images sink to the earth and are statuesque. Stateliness and immobility rather than rhythmical grace are their main marks. Keats's imagination was transported to the dream-land of the " mediæval and the classic spirit-world in their thousand-columned caverns of myriad-reflecting stalactite and other crystalline formations." The description of the underground wanderings of Endymion in Book II reveals Keats's love of gigantic forms in their motionless pose :

....the metal woof,

Like Vulcan's rainbow, with some monstrous roof
Curves hugely : now, far in the deep abyss,
It seems an angry lightning, and doth hiss
Fancy into belief : anon it leads

* Legouis, *Spenser*, p. 101.

† G. W. Knight *The Starlit Dome*, p. 259.

Through winding passages, where sameness breeds
Vexing conceptions of some sudden change ;
Whether to silver grots, or giant range
Of sapphire columns, or fantastic bridge
Athwart a flood of crystal.

This passage invites comparison with Spenser's picture of the Cave of Mammon in the Legend of Temperance :

That houses forme within was rude and strong,
Lyke an huge cave hewne out of rocky clifte,
From whose rough vault the ragged breaches hong
Embost with massy gold of glorious guifte,
And with rich metall loaded every rifte,
That heavy ruine they did seeme to threatt ;

.. ..

Both rooffe, and floore, and walls, were all of gold,
But overgrowne with dust and old decay,
And hid in darkenes, that none could behold
The hew thereof. . . .

CHAPTER IV

PLATONIC IDEAS IN "ENDYMION"

Keats is generally known as a sensuous poet who delighted in the beauty of form and colour and in the voluptuous enjoyment of the lusciousness of nature. Languor and melody had a strange fascination for him, and reverie and day-dream were his special province. Drowsiness and "the embalmed darkness" of the "forest dim" appear to have marked him out as their own. These aspects of his poetry were partly responsible for the tone of *Adonais* in which Shelley expressed his condolence and also his indignation at Keats's untimely death. Its hurrying train of beautiful images and the modulation of its verse also reflect the common estimate of the poet. Keats is further looked upon as a victim of mental malady and melancholy feelings, which prompted his desire to "leave the world" and "fade far away, dissolve" in the air. As a lover of romance, Keats dreamt golden dreams of far-off ages into which he wanted to escape from drab and painful reality.

But Keats's poetry has another aspect, though these are some of the most important and most significant and should be given the prominence they deserve. Over and above his sensuousness, his morbid impulse to escape from reality and his romanticism, Keats has a note of intellectuality which is unmistakable. It reveals itself in Keats's idealism. It is this which raises his *Endymion* from

“ the platform of sense to the lofty pedestal of *transcendental* Romance.” His poetry runs over with fancy, and when he indulges in self-introspection, incongruous images rush in to form grotesque combinations. But the intellectual framework prevents them from degenerating into a medley. Though colour and sensuous imagery* abound in *Endymion*, the hero's soul is directed solely to the ideal of Beauty, and his love of Beauty is not the outcome of mere romanticism, escapism or sense-worship; it has affinity with the intellectual sentiment of wonder. In this respect it bears a resemblance to Shelley's *Alastor* and *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty*. Their intellectual note clearly appears—to give one illustration—in the Hymn to Pan in *Endymion* :

Be still the unimaginable lodge
 For solitary thinkings; such as dodge
 Conception to the very bourne of heaven,
 Then leave the naked brain: be still the leaven,
 That spreading in this dull and clodded earth,
 Gives it a touch ethereal—a new birth :

Shelley's *Hymn* is an invocation to Beauty which transcends sense and is perceptible by the mind only. Like *Endymion*, *Alastor* describes a quest. In spite of the reckless prodigality of description, of fragrance and melody which are scattered lavishly, and under which sense reels and faints, its intellectual note is apparent. The ideal in *Endymion* too is Beauty

* “ Without losing its sensuousness, his poetry refined itself and grew more inward, and the sensational was elevated into the typical by the control of that finer sense which underlies the senses and is the *spirit* of them.” Lowell, *Literary Essays*, Vol. I, p. 246.

another aspect of which is Truth, and is traceable to Plato and the Neo-Platonists. Beauty and knowledge are the same according to them, and the intellectual and aesthetic ideals are identifiable.

Sir Sidney Colvin remarks, "The essence of Keats's task is to set forth the craving of the poet for full communion with the *essential spirit of Beauty* in the world, and the *discipline* by which he is led, through the exercise of the active human sympathies and the toilsome *acquisition of knowledge*, to the prosperous and beatific achievement of his quest."* Keats's pursuit of the Platonic ideal in his poem is also pointed out by Bradley in slightly different language: "...it seems evident that in both poems (*viz.*, *Endymion* and *Hyperion*) something which may be called an 'inner meaning' was to be shadowed forth by the story. The adventures of Endymion are also the experiences of the poetic soul in its search for union with the *absolute Beauty*."†

Doubts may be expressed about the likelihood of the presence of Platonic ideas in Keats. He did not know Greek and could not have studied Plato or Plotinus in the original. His knowledge of classical mythology was derived from Renaissance translations from Greek and Latin into English as well as from classical dictionaries. Plato was translated by Ficinus into Latin under the patronage of the Medicis of Florence in the fifteenth century. His translation of Plotinus into Latin was followed by a voluminous commentry. Ficinus's Latin commentary

* *John Keats*, p. 235. Notecutt says that Phœbe typifies poetry. See Ch. V.

† Chambers's *Cyclopaedia of English Literature*, Vol. III, p. 100.

on the *Symposium* was also rendered into Italian. Neo-Platonic and Platonic ideas were elaborated by Pico della Mirandola in his Italian commentary on Benivieni's *Ode of Love*, which was translated into English by Thomas Stanley in the sixteenth century.* They were also discussed by Castiglione in his *Il Cortegiano* (translated into English by Hoby), by Romci in his *Discorsi*, by Cardinal Bembo in his *Degli Asolani*, by Nenna in *Il Nennio* and by other Italian writers as well. Keats had some knowledge of Latin, but researches into the contents of his library reveal that he did not possess any Latin translation of Plato or Plotinus. He is said to have picked up Italian rather late and translated part of *Orlando Furioso*. But he does not appear to have been interested in any Italian treatise on Neo-Platonism or in any commentary on Plato. He could have read English translations of Italian treatises like Hoby's *Courteyr*. But there is no evidence that he did so. He was, however, soaked in Elizabethan poetry like Spenser's and Shakespeare's. Spenser's *Foure Hymnes* and the *Amoretti*, like Shakespeare's *Sonnets*,† are full of Platonic idealism. Many Elizabethan sonneteers, including Spenser, borrowed it from La Pléiade sonneteers of France.‡ The French expression 'L'Idée' by which is meant the Platonic Idea was responsible for the anagram *Delia*, the title of Daniel's sonnet-cycle published in 1594. The title

* The translation is entitled *A Platonick Discourse upon Love*.

† G. Wyndham. *The Poems of Shakespeare*.

‡ *Modern Language Review*, Vol. IV, p. 67. Sidney Lee, Introduction to *Elizabethan Sonnets*.

of Drayton's sonnet-cycle *Idea*, published in 1603, was suggested by 'L'Idée' of Claude de Pontoux. The full title of another series is *Idea's Mirror*. Platonism had also attracted Milton whom Keats studied closely and imitated. Keats met Wordsworth and discussed poetry with him, and Wordsworth fused empiricism with Neo-Platonism.* He also met Shelley and listened to his discourses on Plato. These must have taught him many characteristic features of Platonic philosophy.

But in *Endymion* Keats was specially indebted to Bk. I of the *Faerie Queene* for Platonic ideas. Spenser's poem was marked out as a chivalric romance which also allegorised the Platonic quest of ideal Beauty. *Endymion* was the outcome of Keats's love of this allegorical romance which he adopted as model. Hence Keats almost unconsciously borrowed its Platonism.

But Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* and *The Man in the Moon* are believed to have suggested the essential features of the plot of Keats's poem. In the former Phœbe disguises herself as a nymph, woos Endymion and makes him renounce her service to which he had pledged himself for the love of the nymph she is impersonating. But at last she discloses her identity and rewards his love. Keats represents Phœbe's amorous deception as twofold. In both the poems of Drayton it is Phœbe who woos Endymion (but with a lecture in *The Man in the Moon*), and seeks him personally. Keats makes

* Finney, *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 258.

Endymion the wooer after he has dreamt of the goddess, and sends him on a long quest of his beloved, which covers a very large part of the poem and offers full scope for the allegory. In spite of these departures of Keats, Drayton's *Endimion and Phoebe* has been regarded as the source of his plot which has been enlarged by the introduction of additional episodes. But Drayton's poem is only a re-handling of a Greek nature-myth with its primitive characteristics. Lyly's *Endimion* stands on a different footing altogether, and allegorizes the events of the court of Elizabeth. There is no subtler significance in any one of them, although it has been suggested, as it may well be suggested, that in Drayton as much as in the original myth, the moon is a vague symbol of natural beauty. Keats's *Endymion* is an obvious allegory and is intended to be one from start to finish. Its philosophic significance is deeper and more comprehensive. Ideal beauty, or the beauty of Truth, which is the Supreme Reality in Plato, is what Phœbe stands for.

To discuss the Platonic ideas in Keats's *Endymion*. The *Phaedrus* depicts the beauty of Truth as a glorious vision. The soul is symbolised in this dialogue in a chariot drawn by two winged horses and driven by a charioteer. 'When perfect,' she soars upwards and sees this vision. But the "imperfect soul, losing her wings and drooping in her flight at last settles on the solid ground." In *Endymion* the lovers mounted two winged steeds, soared up to heaven and saw the glorious Phœbe, but the thought of his mortal love in the mind of Endymion made

his steed sink downwards, as the Indian maid melted away and the goddess faded from view. Keats's debt to the *Phaedrus* is here clear.*

Keats's poetic treatment of Absolute Beauty also shows his obligation to Plato as to Spenser. In Plato it is wonderful and ravishing. It is figured forth in a lady transcendently fair, viz., in Gloriana in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and in the beautiful Phœbe in *Endymion*. Both of them enrapture the hearts of their lovers. Again, Plato represents mystic communion with the Beauty of Truth as visual experience, and in Spenser as in Keats the beloved's beauty flashes upon the lover as a glorious vision in a dream. Endymion's description of Phœbe leaves no room for doubt that she is a mere symbol, not a creature of flesh and blood. She is "that completed form of all completeness," "that high perfection of all sweetness," "a bright something sailing down apace." Earthly beauty pales into insignificance beside her, and Endymion, like the lover of dialectic in the *Republic*, loses all his previous interest in sensible objects and worldly pursuits—in the beauty of trees and flowers, in festivities and in hunting—and devotes himself to the task of finding her out. Here Keats was really influenced by Spenser's conception of Gloriana's beauty which

* A chariot drawn by celestial coursers that 'paw the unyielding air' figures in Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1813). In *The Daemon of the World* (1815)

Four shapeless shadows bright and beautiful

Draw that strange car of glory, reins of light

" " Check their unearthly speed; they stop and fold

Their wings of braided air:

The imagery from the *Phaedrus* in *Endymion* may have been derived by Keats through Shelley. It appears also in *Sleep and Poetry*.

cast its spell on Prince Arthur and made him a wanderer in the fairyland in quest of her. Arthur says :

When I awoke, and found her place devoyd,
 And nought but pressed gras where she had lyen,
 I sorrowed all so much as earst I joyd,
 And washed all her place with watry eyen.
 From that day forth I lov'd that face divyne ;
 From that day forth I cast in carefull mynd,
 To seeke her out with labor and long tyme,
 And never vowd to rest till her I fynd :
 Nyne monethes I seek in vain, yet ni'll that vow
 unbynd.*

Keats marked this passage in his copy of the *Faerie Queene* which is now in the Lowell collection in the Harvard College Library.†

Plato's distinction between Uranian Venus and Pandemian Aphrodite, and hence between love as intellectual or spiritual urge and as attraction of sensible beauty, is well-known. This is particularly emphasised in *Endymion* :

—if this *earthly love* has power to make
 Men's being mortal, immortal ; to shake
 Ambition from their memories, and brim
 Their measure of content : what merest whim,
 Seems all this poor endeavour after fame,
 To one, who keeps within his steadfast aim
 A *love immortal*, an immortal too.

Earthly love too uplifts man, but it is radically different from love of Truth. The contrast is not accidental. It has a history and an ancestry.

* *F. Q.*, I. ix. xv.

† *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 305.

Platonic philosophy furnishes a link between the visible and the invisible, between sensible beauty and absolute beauty or the ultimate Reality which in some philosophical systems is transcendent and quite unconnected with matter. Plato's idea as explained in the *Symposium*, was elaborated and clarified by Plotinus and later by Ficinus, Bembo, Castiglione and others. Man, according to them, rises by several distinct stages from material to spiritual beauty. This gradation of beauty and the march of the human soul up the rungs of a ladder of ascent are remarkable features of Neo-Platonic thought. Keats too recognises stages of beauty and in *Endymion* he allegorizes the progressive realization of its highest form. Here is another proof of Neo-Platonic influence on Keats, which came through Elizabethans like Spenser and Shakespeare.

The elaboration by the Neo-Platonists of this conception of progression is interesting. Pico della Mirandola mentions six stages of the soul's progress, and says, "From Material Beauty we ascend to the first Fountain by six Degrees: the soul through the sight represents to herself the Beauty of some particular person, inclines to it, is pleased with it and while she rests here, is in the first, the most imperfect material degree. (2) She reforms by her imagination the image she hath received, making it more perfect as more spiritual; and separating it from Matter, brings it a little nearer Ideal Beauty. (3) By the light of the agent Intellect abstracting this Form from all singularity, she considers the Universal

Nature of Corporeal Beauty by itself; this is the highest degree the soul can reach whilst she goes no further than sense. (4) Reflecting upon her own operation, the knowledge of universal Beauty, and considering that everything founded in Matter is particular, she concludes this Universality proceeds not from the outward object, but her Intrinsecal power; and reasons thus: If in the dimme Glasse of Material Phantasmes this beauty is represented by vertue of my Light, it follows that, beholding it in the clear Mirrour of my substance devested of those clouds, it will appear more perspicuous; thus turning into herself, she findes the Image of Ideal Beauty communicated to her by the Intellect, the object of Celestial Love. (5) She ascends from this Idea in her self, to the place where Celestial Venus is, in her proper form: who in fullness of her Beauty not being comprehensible, by any particular Intellect, she, as much as in her lies, endeavours to be united to the first Minde, the chiefest of Creatures, and general Habitation of Ideal Beauty. Obtaining this, she terminates, and fixeth her journey; this is the sixth and last degree.* (Castiglione too portrays six distinct stages of the progress of the lover. He first impresses the fair features of the beloved upon his mind. Straightway his imagination idealises these features, and she appears to him to be fairer than she really is. Stimulated by this idealised beauty of the lady, the lover next comes to form an image of a face or figure which is, as it were, the sum

* *A Platonick Discourse upon Love*, Bk. III.

of all loveliness—"a combination of selected charms." In the language of Castiglione, he next forms a universal concept and reduces the "multitude of these beauties to the unity of that single beauty which is spread over human nature at large. In this way he will no longer contemplate the particular beauty of one woman, but the universal beauty which adorns all bodies." In the next stage the lover realises beauty as "an inherent part of the soul." Castiglione continues: "Now the same impulse which hitherto inclined the lover to universalise the beauty of woman, urges him to universalise that abstract beauty which he discovers within himself, and he feels out after and discovers that encircling, all-inclusive beauty of which he had before recognised but partial and subordinate manifestations. No longer does the soul contemplate beauty in her own particular intellect, but she looks forth, enraptured and ravished by its splendour, upon the vast sea of universal beauty.... Last stage of all, the soul, burning with the sacred fire of true love and yearning to unite herself with so great beauty, actually becomes identified therewith, incorporate in the life of God." Beauty of a single woman, idealisation of this beauty, universal beauty of womankind, beauty as an attribute of the individual mind, intelligible beauty as an Absolute Reality and beauty of God—these are the six stages in Castiglione.*

In the *Amoretti* as well as in the *Four Hymnes* Spenser observes this gradation of beauty into six

* *The Courtier*, Bk. IV.



types.* In Shakespeare's sonnets too there is a similar classification. But here the stages are not well-marked, and their number cannot be accurately ascertained. Ordinary sensible beauty which forms the first stage, is derived by "duller earth" from the "Cyprian Queene" in Spenser's *Hymne in honour of Beautie* :

That is the thing which giveth pleasant grace
To all things faire, that kindleth lovely fyre,
Light of thy lampe; which, shyning in the face,
Thence to the soule darts amorous desyre—

This beauty

....is nought else but mixture made
Of colours faire, and goodly temp'rament
Of pure complexions, that shall quickly fade
And passe away, like a sommers shade; †

In the second stage the sweet passion of love

....all sordid basenesse doth expell,
And the refyned mynd doth newly fashion
Unto a fairer forme,—‡

The "fairer forme" corresponds to idealised beauty which is referred to in Shakespeare's lines :

".....my soul's *imaginary sight*
Presents thy shadow to my *sightless view*,
Which, like a *jewel* hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous, and her old face
new.§

* See *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, Vol. XIII, pp. 418-20.

† *H. B.*, St. 10.

‡ *H. L.*, St. 28.

§ *Sonnet XXVII.*

This is different from the impression of physical beauty on the lover's heart, as suggested in Sonnet XXIV of Shakespeare :

 Mine eye hath play'd the *painter* and hath stell'd
 "Thy beauty's form in table of my heart.—

Passages dealing with the four other stages also abound in Spenser and Shakespeare.

In Keats the rungs of the ladder of ascent number four only in place of six as in the Neo-Platonists. Endymion passes them before fully realising essential beauty. Beauty of nature which forms the first rung is followed by the beauty of art. Friendship is the next stage and love is the last. These are allegorised in the four books of *Endymion*. Keats gives an exposition of his philosophy in a significant passage in Book I of his poem :

Fold

A *rose-leaf* round thy finger's taperness,
 And soothe thy lips : hist ! when the airy stress
 Of *music's* kiss impregnates the free winds,
 And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Aeolian magic from their lucid wombs :
 Then *old songs* waken from enclouded tombs ;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave ;
 Ghosts of melodious prophesyings rave
 Round every spot where trod Apollo's foot ;
 Bronze clarions awake, and faintly bruit,
 Where long ago a giant battle was ;
 And, from the turf, a *lullaby* doth pass
 In every place where infant *Orpheus* slept.
 Feel we these things !—that moment have we stept
 Into a sort of *oneness*, and our state

Is like a floating *spirit's*. But there are
Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
More self-destroying, leading, *by degrees*,
To the chief intensity : the crown of these
Is made of *love* and *friendship*, and sits high
Upon the forehead of humanity.

None of Keats's stages appears to be identical with any one of the Neo-Platonic grades. But the differences are superficial, while the similarity of the two descriptions of the soul's upward march is sufficient to justify the inference of Keats's obligation to Neo-Platonic thought. In Keats each of the stages gives a dim idea of the goal, though there are also the intermediate stages. In the Neo-Platonists the goal is not indicated at all until the last stage has been passed. While *Endymion* was going through the press, Keats revised this passage and prefixed the following lines in which he expressly mentioned the Neo-Platonic ideal of fellowship with essence, for he realised on second thought that an explicit statement of his theme was necessary :

Wherein lies happiness? In that which becks
Our ready minds to fellowship divine,
A fellowship with essence ; till we shine,
Full alchemis'd, and free of space.

In the letter to his publisher in which Keats asked him to incorporate the added lines, he wrote, " You must indulge me by putting this in for setting aside the badness of the other, such a preface is necessary to the subject. The whole thing must, I think, have appeared to you, who are a consecutive Man, as a

thing almost of mere words—but I assure you that when I wrote it, it was a *regular stepping of the Imagination towards a Truth*. My having written that Argument will perhaps be of the greatest service to me of anything I ever did. It set before me at once the *gradations of Happiness* even like a kind of Pleasure Thermometer.* And gradations of progress from sense to spirit are, as already pointed out, a prominent mark of Platonism.

Keats's love of sensations was unequivocally expressed in his letters. Appreciation of natural beauty which is the first rung of Keats's ladder of ascent, is the theme of Bk. I of *Endymion*. In Plato's *Symposium* beauty of sensible objects forms the first stage of the lover's upward journey. Pico specifically calls it the beauty of 'some particular person.' Castiglione starts from the beauty of an individual woman and goes up gradually to her idealised beauty, universal beauty of womankind, etc. But these verbal differences are not material. Concrete and sensible beauty is in all of them the starting-point of man's search for ideal Beauty or the beauty of Truth. In the first book of *Endymion* the first stage of progress has two divisions. One of these represents enjoyment of the beauty of nature in general. Thus

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever :
 Its loveliness increases ; it will never
 Pass into nothingness ;
 Therefore, on every morrow, are we wreathing

* Letter to John Taylor, dated the 30th January, 1818.

A flowery band to bind us to the earth,
 Spite of despondence, of the inhuman dearth
 Of noble natures, of the gloomy days,
 Of all the unhealthy and o'er-darkened ways
 Made for our searching :

The other division stands for the worship of individual beautiful objects like the sun, the moon, etc.

Some *shape of beauty* moves away the pall
 From our dark spirits. Such the *sun*, the *moon*,
Trees old and young, sprouting a shady boon
 For simple sheep ;—

These two divisions correspond to the second and first stages respectively of the soul's upward march in Neo-Platonic philosophy and hence in Spenser and Shakespeare. Since the realization of each stage in Keats, unlike that in the Neo-Platonists and in Spenser, gives a foretaste of ideal beauty, Endymion has a dream-vision, even in Book I, of the transcendent loveliness of Phœbe.

The second stage of Endymion's progress symbolises appreciation of the beauty of art, which is the theme of Bk. II. Endymion leaves Mount Latmos and, guided by a butterfly, comes to a fountain near the mouth of a cavern. It had originally been a bud, which changed successively into a rose, a butterfly and a nymph. These represent the fleeting charm of this ever-changing world of matter, which yet is the only guide to sublimer and more intellectual beauty, *e.g.*, the beauty of art. Endymion next falls into an ecstasy and, directed by 'airy voices,' descends through the

cavern into the under-world which is the domain of poetry and art-treasures. Here he sees

The mighty ones who have made eternal day
For Greece and England.

These were the poet's Renaissance masters—Spenser, Shakespeare and the rest. It is arts like poetry and music that are referred to in the following lines which occur, however, in Bk. I where the gradations of the lover's progress are outlined by Keats :

—when the airy stress
Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds,
And with a sympathetic touch unbinds
Æolian magic from their lucid wombs :
Then *old songs* waken from enclouded tombs ;
Old ditties sigh above their father's grave ;
Ghosts of *melodious prophesyings* rave
Round every spot where trod *Apollo's foot* ;
Bronze *clarions* awake, and faintly bruit,
Where long ago a giant battle was ;
And, from the turf, a *lullaby* doth pass
In every place where infant Orpheus slept.

Endymion also sees " wonders—past the wit of any spirit to tell, " *viz.*, numerous specimens of sculpture and architecture of the most exalted kind :

....he went
Into a *marble gallery*, passing through
A mimic *temple*, so complete and true
In sacred custom, that he well-nigh fear'd
To search it inwards ; whence far off appear'd,
Through a long *pillar'd vista*, a fair *shrine*,.....

Again,

....with unusual gladness, on he hies
Through caves, and palaces of *mottled ore*,
Gold dome, and *crystal wall*, and *turquoise floor*,
Black polish'd porticos of awful shade,
And, at the last, a *diamond balustrade*,
Leading afar past wild magnificence,
Spiral through ruggedest loopholes, and thence
Stretching across a void, then guiding o'er
Enormous chasms, where, all foam and roar,
Streams subterranean tease their granite beds....

This stage too is of Neo-Platonic origin. In the *Symposium* mention is made of the beauty of 'fair forms' as a rung of the famous ladder of ascent. Beauty of mind or intellect which is its source, is also referred to in the *Symposium* as well as in the *Enneads* of Plotinus and in the works of Pico and Castiglione. These two types of beauty are realised in their third and fourth stages. Says Pico, "By the light of the agent intellect abstracting this *Form* from all singularity, she (the Soul) considers the Universal Nature of Corporeal Beauty by itself." This may be called the beauty of form and outline. In the next stage its origin is traced to the soul or mind—"turning *into herself*, she (the Soul) finds the *image* of Ideal Beauty communicated to her by the Intellect." Spenser waxes eloquent over the *beauty of creation* as a work of art, and infers from it the great beauty of the *mind or intellect* of the Creator :

....still as every thing doth upward tend,
And further is from earth, so still more cleare

And faire it growes, till to his perfect end
 Of purest beautie it at last ascend ;
 Ayre more then water, fire much more then ayre,
 And heaven then fire, appeares more pure and fayre.*

These thus in faire each other farre excellling,
 As to the Highest they approach more neare,
 Yet is that Highest farre beyond all telling,
 Fairer then all the rest which there appeare,
 Though all their beauties joynd together were ;....†

...how can we see with feeble eyne
 The glory of that Majestie Divine,
 In sight of whom both Sun and Moone are darke,
 Compared to his least resplendent sparke ?
 The meanes, therefore, which unto us is lent
 Him to behold, is on his *workes* to looke,
 Which he hath made in beauty excellent,
 And in the same, as in a *brassen booke*,
 To reade enregistred in every nooke
 His *goodnesse*, which his *beautie* doth declare.‡

Keats's view on the transformation of natural beauty into the beauty of art, is revealed in his letters. When he was composing *Endymion*, Keats described the function of the poet in a letter to Haydon as "the looking upon the Sun, the Moon, the Stars, the Earth and its contents, as materials to form greater things—that is to say, ethereal things."§ When

* *H. H. B.*, St. 7.

† *H. H. B.*, St. 15.

‡ *H. H. B.*, St. 18-19. Italics mine.

§ Letter to Haydon, dated 10-11 May, 1817.

visiting the Lake district in June, 1818, he wrote about his own ambitions in life : " I shall learn poetry *here* and shall henceforth write more than ever, for the abstract endeavour of being able to add a mite to that *mass of beauty* which is harvested from *these grand materials*, by the finest spirits, and put into *ethereal existence* for the relish of one's fellows."*

After Endymion has seen the art treasures, he enters a bower, falls asleep and embraces his unknown celestial mistress in a dream. This may be interpreted as the realisation of the essence of beauty to which the beauty of art or of intellect is but a stepping-stone. But it has been objected that it is a nympholeptic dream rather than a Neo-Platonic vision. Whatever the correct interpretation may be, it is clear that the second book marks a fresh stage in the progress of Endymion, the seeker of Beauty or lover.

In the Renaissance epoch Friendship was regarded as a virtue with romantic associations. The Renaissance conception was of Greek origin. *Charmides* and *Lysis* were two famous Platonic dialogues on Friendship. Aristotle analysed and defined it, like other moral virtues, with accuracy and precision. In Plato it meant the same thing as love—only it was supposed to exist between man and man, while Love was generally a link between man and woman. Friendship was regarded as even superior to love, as it was free from all connection with sex. In Plato Friendship, like Love, is an aspiration for association with good, and is thus an intellectual or

* Letter to Thomas Kents, dated 25-27 June, 1818. Italics mine.

spiritual urge. Elizabethan sonnet-sequences generally ignore Friendship and are solely concerned with Love. But Spenser allegorises Friendship in the Legend of Cambel and Triamond in Bk. IV of the *Faerie Queene*, while Shakespeare celebrates it in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* and the *Sonnets*.

According to the original plan, Friendship in the Platonic sense, as allegorized in Bk. IV of the *Faerie Queene*, was to have appeared as the theme of Bk. III of *Endymion* and the third stage of the hero's upward journey. But under the influence of Wordsworth and Bailey Keats changed it into the humanitarian ideal of benevolence, though the expression Friendship was retained as the description of the third step of ascent as a homage to the Platonic traditions of the Renaissance. "The one, which is personal and active, is an individual discipline; and the other, which is universal and visionary, is a messianic mission." It was Bailey who impressed upon Keats, whom he believed to have been a sceptic, the value of the Christian teachings of Wordsworth.* In *The Excursion* he found discussions of moral problems, which also inspired him with humanitarian ideals of life. Keats announced his new ideal in a letter to Taylor†: "I find cavalier days are gone by. I find that I can have no enjoyment in the world but continual *drinking of knowledge*—I find there is no worthy pursuit but the idea of doing *some good for the world*: Some do it with their society—some with their wit—some with their *benevolence*." In *Tintern Abbey*

* H. W. Garrod, *Keats*, p. 37.

† Letter to John Taylor, dated the 24th April, 1818.

Keats noticed three stages of the growth of the poet's mind in relation to nature. In the first stage sensation predominates, and boyish activities are its manifestation. In youth, which represents the second stage, love of beauty is intense and feeling replaces mere physical activity. In the third stage nature supplies the inspiration to serve God through service to humanity. *The Excursion* preaches that

for the instructed, time will come
When they shall meet no object but may teach
Some acceptable lesson to their minds
Of *human suffering*, or of *human joy*.*

and that they will, in course of time, acquire
The ability to spread the blessings wide
Of true *philanthropy*.....†

The lesson of *The Excursion* was all the more strongly impressed on Keats as he thought that he was passing through what he called the "dark passages." These represented bitter experiences, disillusionment, gloom and misery. There is a time in every man's life when "We see not the balance of good and evil. We are in a Mist,"‡ and it was during this period of Keats's life that the poet accepted the humanitarian creed.

Art itself has a humanizing influence which is brought out at the end of Bk. II when Endymion meets Alpheus and Arethusa. As he hears the story of their love, compassion fills his heart and

* *The Excursion*, Bk. IV.

† *Ibid.*

‡ Letter to Reynolds, dated the 3rd May, 1818.

makes him forget his own love-lorn condition. "Just as his early cult of natural beauty had prepared him for his....appreciation of artistic beauty, so now his imaginative participation in the universal humanity of art prepared him for his later experience of friendship and love, the final stages in his ascent to a *fellowship with essence*."*

Endymion's benevolent acts or acts of friendship meant the undoing of the work of Circe, the type of sensuality, and restoration of her lovers to their former condition. Friendship may here be taken to symbolize "fair actions," one of the rungs of the Platonic ladder of ascent. Endymion could perform the miracle or acts of friendship because he had pursued his spiritual or intellectual ideal unswervingly, while Glaucus had violated it and had fallen. Apart from benevolence, therefore, Bk. III also allegorizes the evil of vulgar love or materialism which impedes the upward march of the human spirit as well as the worth of normal human love which helps it. Lovers of Circe who had been reduced to the likeness of animals† and the senility of Glaucus typify the former and Glaucus's love of Scylla illustrates the latter. The exploring of

all forms and substances

Straight homeward to their symbol-essences‡

is Neo-Platonic, and means some sort of catharsis. This consists of intellectual culture, and is typified in

* Finney, *Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 309.

† The idea that the souls of sensual people pass into the bodies of lower animals is traceable to Plato's *Phaedo*.

‡ *Endymion*, Bk. III.

Glaucus's rapt devotion to study. Just as Keats's intellectuality is coated over with sensuousness at times—his love of truth with lusciousness of imagery,—it is also obscured in Bk. III by humanitarian principles.

Love and Friendship are both higher rungs in the ladder of the soul's ascent than the beauty of nature and of art :

....there are
 Richer entanglements, enthrallments far
 More self-destroying, leading, by degrees,
 To the chief intensity ; the crown of these
 Is made of *love* and *friendship*, and sits high
 Upon the forehead of humanity.
 All its more ponderous and bulky worth
 Is friendship, whence there ever issues forth
 A steady splendour ; but at the tip-top,
 There hangs by unseen film, an orb'd drop
 Of light, and that is *love*.....

Book IV is an allegory which figures forth how human love is related to the divine, and it reveals traces of Neo-Platonism, which studies minutely the origin of the passion and its sublimation. According to the Neo-Platonists love is generated by beauty. Material beauty issues from the Prime Source in streams, like rays from the sun, and is infused into earthly objects which look beautiful in consequence. Human beauty which inspires love passes through the eyes of the lover and flows into his soul which is endowed with wings for heavenward flight. Referring to the change which comes upon the soul, in consequence of the

effluence of beauty, Plato says, "As he (the lover) receives the *effluence of beauty* through *the eyes*, the wing moistens and he warms. As he warms, the parts out of which the wing grew, and which had been hitherto closed and rigid, and had prevented the wing from shooting forth, are melted, and as nourishment streams upon him, the lower end of the wing begins to swell and grow from the root upwards."* The result is a feeling of comfort. Castiglione follows Plato and says that when a beautiful face presents itself before the lover, streams of beauty flow into the latter's heart through his eyes, heating and moistening the pores of the heart and thus liquefying the *virtù* congealed in them. This liquid *virtù* is then diffused round the heart where it blossoms forth, and it sends out through the eyes of the lover certain vaporous 'spirits' formed of the essence of his blood. Earthly love commences with the influx of beauty on the soul or the heart, while the growth of the wings stands for the transformation of this into celestial love. This follows an effervescence or turmoil in the soul symbolised by the moistening of the roots of the wings† or the liquefaction of the *virtù*. These Neo-Platonic ideas inspired Shakespeare and Spenser and, through them, Keats also. Fancy, according to Shakespeare, is bred in the eye. But it is not always confined there :

—love, first learned in a *lady's eyes*,
Lives not alone immured in the brain,
But, with the motion of all elements,

* *Phaedrus*, 251.

† *The Courtier*, Bk. IV.

Courses as swift as thought in every power,
 And gives to every power a double power,
 Above their functions and their offices.
 It adds a *precious seeing to the eye* ;
 A lover's eyes will gaze an eagle blind ;

.. ..

From women's eyes this doctrine I derive :
 They sparkle still the right Promethean fire ;
 They are the books, the arts, the academes,
 That show, *contain, and nourish all the world*,
 Else none at all in aught proves excellent.*

Spenser refers, under the veil of classical imagery, to the Platonic idea of streams of beauty passing through the lover's eyes and imparting warmth to his heart :

....that imperious boy

Doth therewith tip his sharp empoisoned darts, [coy
 Which glancing through the eyes with countenance
 Rest not till they have *pierst the trembling harts*,
 And *kindled flame* in all their inner parts.†

He also indicates how love may spiritualise the soul which communes with Truth or Divinity directly in consequence :

Then shall thy ravisht soule inspired bee
 With heavenly thoughts farre above humane skil,
 And thy bright *radiant eyes* shall plainly see
 Th' *Idee of his pure glorie* present still
 Before thy face, that all thy spirits shall fill
 With sweete enragement of celestiall love.‡

* *Love's Labour's Lost*, IV. iii. Italics mine.

† *H. L.*, St. 18. Italics mine.

‡ *H. II. L.*, St. 41.

Keats reproduces the Neo-Platonic idea of the birth of love in the lover's eye, the effervescence in his soul, its elevation to a higher plane and its merger in the supreme Reality, with the consequent feeling of peace and bliss in the lover's mind :

.....its influence,
 'Thrown in *our eyes*, genders a novel sense,
 At which we *start and fret* : till in the end,
 Melting into its radiance, we blend,
 Mingle, and so *become a part of it*,—
 Nor with aught else can our souls interknit
 So wingedly : when we combine therewith,
 Life's self is nourish'd by its proper pith,
 And we are nurtured like a pelican brood.*

The transformation is also typified by the upward journey of Endymion with the beautiful Indian maid. He had fallen into a trance in the temple of Neptune and was borne up to the surface of the earth. When he fell in love with the Indian maid at the beginning of Bk. IV, a voice cried, "Woe, woe, woe, to that Endymion," as if mortal love was going to kill his high aspirations. But Mercury appeared and touched the sward with his wand. At once 'from the turf outsprang' two winged steeds. The lovers mounted them and soared into the air. This signifies that imagination, or dialectic as Plato would call it, might carry even mortal desire to spiritual heights. Endymion's dream portrays the effect of this sublimation. He found that he was in Heaven and recognised Phoebe as the goddess of his dream. A *vision* of the

* *Endymion*, Bk. I.

ideal as reward for the soul's upward journey, is also mentioned in Spenser.*

Endymion in Heaven is torn between the love of the ideal Beauty of his dreams and ecstasies and the attraction of the mortal charms of the Indian maid. As a result, he loses both, and his journey seems fruitless. He is borne down, and he passes through the Den of Quietude to the earth. Here he meets the maid again and decides to be her worshipper and give up the futile quest of Phœbe or essential Beauty. When she refuses his offer, he resolves to spend his life as a hermit. But the maid now reveals herself as the goddess Phœbe. This amorous deception was suggested by Drayton's story, but its meaning is the same as the teaching of Platonic philosophy, *viz.*, that the beauty of a particular woman is only a manifestation of ideal Beauty and that mortal love is the best means of attaining to divine love. Endymion had only seen Phœbe in short dreams in the first two stages of his upward journey, and met her when in the third stage humanitarian impulses stirred him. But love was a more ennobling influence, and it spiritualised him and united him permanently with the object of his arduous quest.

What has been called cosmogonic love is explained in the speech of Eryximachus in the *Symposium*. The beauty of creation is the effect of the implanting of this love in discordant elements. But beauty is connected with love as its generating cause by Diotima. She first explains love as a biological urge

* *H. H. B.*, St. 37.

leading to procreation, and attributes it to men as well as to plants and beasts. Next she describes it as man's desire for the eternal possession of beauty. She says that love "is only birth in beauty whether of body or of soul.....There is a certain age at which human nature is desirous of procreation; and this procreation must be in beauty and not in deformity." The link between beauty and procreation or love is also dwelt on by Neo-Platonists like Ficinus, Castiglione, Romei and Bembo. Castiglione says, "Love is nothing else but a certaine coveting to enjoy beutie"* ('Amor non è altro che un certo desiderio di fruir la bellezza.†) Romei remarks: "Love is nothing else than a desire to unite with beauty.....not only with the soul, but also with the body."‡ The poetical treatment of the topic in Spenser's first two hymns is remarkable and must have attracted the notice of Keats. The creed that beauty facilitates the growth of love everywhere in this world or that love is generated or kindled by beauty, finds unique expression in *Endymion*:

—so may Love, although 'tis understood
 The mere *commingling of passionate breath*,
 Produce more than our searching witnesseth:
 What I know not: but who, of men, can tell
 That flowers would bloom, or that green fruit would
swoll

To melting pulp, that fish would have bright mail,
 The earth its dower of river, wood and vale,

* *The Courtier*, Bk. IV.

† *Il Cortegiano*, Lib. IV.

• ‡ *Discorsi*, Giornata Seconda.

The meadows runnels, runnels pebble-stones,
The seed its harvest, or the lute its tones,
Tones ravishment, or ravishment its sweet
If human souls would never kiss and greet ?*

Keats might have grasped the truth intuitively, and this would account for the spontaneity, freshness and charm of the passage ; and it may be a mere coincidence that this also reflects a Platonic idea. Yet it is only likely that Platonic philosophy as shaped by the Elizabethans was actually laid under contribution by him.

Sensuousness and idealism are mutually conflicting, though Plato tried to link matter to spirit. Keats's fusion of the two is curious. Keats derived no suggestion about such fusion from Spenser or Plato. Spenser was inspired by traditional Platonism, and material beauty was in his view only a means to the ultimate realisation of Truth or divinity through intermediate stages, and could be dispensed with as soon as it had fulfilled its primary function of helping man to ascend to the next higher stage. Spenser did not believe that matter itself was imbued with spirit. Of Spenser's four Hymns, the first two give prominence to sensuous beauty as rungs of the ladder of ascent. Although it was mentioned only as such, Spenser was apprehensive that he might be taken to have valued it for its own sake. To guard against this possible misinterpretation, he wanted to withdraw them from circulation. But this being impossible, " I resolved at least to amend, and, by way of retractation, to

* *Endymion*, Bk. I.

reforme them, making, in stead of those two Hymnes of earthly or naturall love and beautie, two others of heavenly and celestiall."* In one of them Christ's life and its teachings are introduced as stages of progress of the human soul in its upward flight. In the *Hymne of Heavenly Beautie* even the beauty of angels and archangels is found incapable of conveying to man an idea of Divine Beauty. God's "love, his wisdom, and his blis, His grace, his doome, his mercy, and his might" are therefore mentioned as media

By which he lends us of himselfe a sight !

Keats however was helped by Wordsworth in his synthesis of sensation and idea. Empiricism teaches that there are no innate ideas, and that ideas are mere copies of sense-impressions. Complex ideas, or what are looked upon as abstract ideas, develop out of simple ideas or sensations by the process of association. Wordsworth learnt empirical principles from David Hartley, and he recognised sensations as the source of ideas, even of moral and religious ideas,† though he was at times a Christian philosopher and a transcendentalist. The *Lyrical Ballads*, says Garrod, are only a "revindication in poetry of the life of the senses."‡ On this naturalism Wordsworth based his mysticism which taught how communion with the supreme reality through nature was possible. He believed that sensations from natural objects produce strong passions or emotions in man

* Dedicatory Letter to Lady Margaret and Lady Mary.

† *The Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, p. 239.

‡ *Keats*, p. 127.

and induce a state of ecstasy in which his imagination, stimulated by his passions, apprehends or intuits truth in the form of beauty. These sensations gave him

that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened:—that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on,—
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a *living soul*:
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into *the life of things*.*

Keats however made an amalgam, as it were, of this natural ecstasy of Wordsworth or ecstasy based on natural sensations, with Neo-Platonic ecstasy from which it differed. Neo-Platonist mystics, Christian as well as Pagan, “attained unto a state of ecstasy or spiritual vision by a discipline of fasting and contemplation. By repressing their physical sensations, they believed, they liberated their souls from the dominance of their bodies, strengthened and purified them, and made them fit mediums for divine illumination. Wordsworth, on the contrary, attained unto a state of ecstasy by means of physical sensations. The Neo-Platonic lover, who ascended from

* *Tintern Abbey. Italics mine.*

the love of the beauty of a particular person to the love of the beauty of God, escaped as soon as possible from the personal, material beauty which was his initial inspiration. In the 'stair of love,' which (according to Castiglione and Benivieni) consisted of six steps, the lover abandoned his mistress at the end of the second step."* As he followed Wordsworth and also the Neo-Platonists, Keats was at the same time an idealistic and a sensuous poet, though he gave up his Neo-Platonism later on. Keats was however more pictorial, more luscious and more exuberant than the Lake poet.

Shelley had read Plato in the original, and Keats took in large draughts of Platonism from the philosophical discussions of Shelley in Hunt's coterie in December, 1816. Horace Smith, who met Shelley in Hunt's cottage about this time, said that Shelley's "principal discourse....was of Plato, for whose character, writings and philosophy he expressed unbounded admiration." Shelley published *Alastor* nine months before joining Hunt's circle, and the *Hymn to Intellectual Beauty* one month after this. He too followed Wordsworth in fusing Platonism with contemporary naturalism and empiricism. Shelley thus could not escape from the sway of physical beauty, though, as an idealist, he was so fond of abstract conceptions. In *Alastor* (ll. 149-191) he confused "a nympholeptic dream with a Platonic vision." The nympholeptic dream in *Endymion* is reminiscent of Shelley's.

* Finney, *Evolution of Keats's Poetry*, pp. 295-96.

Keats's own words give a clear enough exposition of his philosophy of beauty. Sensation is in his opinion always the first step of ascent in the upward march of the human soul and imagination is the guide. In a letter to Bailey, dated the 22nd November, 1817, Keats says: "....I have never yet been able to perceive how anything can be known for truth by consecutive reasoning—and yet it must be. Can it be that even the greatest philosopher ever arrived at his goal without putting aside numerous objections? However it may be, O for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts! It is 'a vision in the form of youth,' a shadow of reality to come—and this consideration has further convinced me, for it has come as auxiliary to another favourite speculation of mine, that we shall enjoy ourselves hereafter by having what we called *happiness on Earth repeated in a finer tone* and so repeated. And yet such a fate can only befall those who *delight in sensation* rather than hunger as you do after Truth." Again, "I am certain of nothing but of the holiness of the Heart's affections and the truth of Imagination—what the imagination seizes as Beauty must be truth—whether it existed before or not—for I have the same Idea of all our Passions as of Love—they are all in their sublime, creative of *essential Beauty*."*

* *Italics mine.* See Garrod, *Keats*, pp. 38-42.

CHAPTER V

KEATS AND PSYCHO-ANALYSIS

Psychology studies conscious mental processes. But there is an inner life in man which is hidden like undercurrents in the ocean and which eludes introspection and observation or simulates false appearances. Man is unaware of it or has wrong notions about it. It is subliminal and unconscious.

The conception of the unconscious and its connection with the conscious have of late been elaborated by Psycho-analysts like Freud and Jung. The conscious is generally called the ego which is identical with the free flow of our thoughts, the impressions we receive and the sensations we experience. It has been described as "a coherent organization of mental processes," while the unconscious, called the id by Freud, has been conceived as chaotic.

The ego in man's infancy is unrestrained except by parental authority, and is later watched by what has been called the super-ego—an off-shoot of the ego itself—and controlled by conscience. Parts of the ego and the super-ego are, however, unconscious. But even these do not possess the "primitive and irrational quality" of the id which is "the obscure and inaccessible part of our personality." As Freud remarks, "...the little we know about it we have learnt from the study of dream-work and the formation of neurotic symptoms, and most of that is of a negative character, and can only be described as being

all that the ego is not. We can come nearer to the id with images, and call it a chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement. We suppose that it is somewhere in direct contact with somatic processes, and takes over from them instinctual needs and gives them mental expression, but we cannot say in what substratum this contact is made. These instincts fill it with energy, but it has no organization and no unified will, only an impulsion to obtain satisfaction for the instinctual needs, in accordance with the pleasure principle. The laws of logic—above all, the law of contradiction—do not hold for processes in the id.”*

Though the ego is differentiable from the id by “its tendency to synthesize its contents, to bring together and unify its mental processes” and its “relation to the external world” which is decisive for it, it has to carry out the intentions of the id. “From a dynamic point of view it is weak; it borrows its energy from the id.”† As Read says, “The conduct of the ego throughout life is essentially passive—we are ‘lived,’ as it were, by unknown and uncontrollable forces. But presumably these forces are inherent, differentiated in each individual-being, in fact, that reserve of instincts and passions which normally we repress, but which are never securely under the control of our conscious reason.”‡

The origin of the unconscious has been traced to a debility of consciousness which may cause distinct

* *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis*, pp. 98-99.

† *Ibid.*, p. 102.

‡ H. Read, *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, p. 20.

functions or contents to drop below the threshold and become subliminal. Repression of disagreeable experiences and of sex and gregarious instincts, at the bidding of character, is also supposed to be its cause. On the other hand, the unconscious is so formless and chaotic in its nature that it is believed to be underivable from any conscious mental phenomenon. It has accordingly been remarked that it is the conscious mind that is based upon, and results from, "an unconscious psyche which is prior to consciousness"—the primordial darkness and twilight of the mind. Our emotions, imagination, fancy, etc., are but shadowy manifestations of the unconscious, whether original or derivative.

Man's personality is the product of a reconciliation of the demands of the ego, the super-ego and the id. Character is sometimes identified with personality. Generally the former is the outcome of the observation by the super-ego of the ego and the censure of conscience, as prompted by external reality, leading to a tendency to follow fixed rules of thought and conduct and old creeds or dogmas. But the latter refers to the totality of human life and mind as shaped by the predominance of the unknown and chaotic id over the other elements.

Psycho-analysis has in recent times claimed to throw light on many things and to solve many mysteries. Dreams, emotions, hallucinations and mental complexes have come within its purview, and it is now trying to interpret literature.

Character, as the outcome of inhibition, is not conducive either to spontaneity of thought or to

freshness of outlook. A man of character is inclined to discipline, to obedience and to the worship of formulæ, but is incapable of intellectual freedom. Bold speculation on which are based science, critical disquisition, philosophy, etc., is the product of man's conscious mind unaffected by the super-ego and conscience. But the 'literature of power' which, as distinct from the 'literature of knowledge,' has a perennial interest, is the product not of the ego or of the super-ego but of personality as dominated by the id, not so much of the conscious mind as of the unconscious. It is inspired not so much by intellect as by imagination and fancy, the mysterious faculties in the profoundest depth of the human soul. The best specimens of literature only throw out vague suggestions,* and their authors are not even aware of the nature of their work—they are hardly conscious artists. Lubbock says, "...in such a mood of *creative activity*, the author stands face to face with his *personality*. He stands fully conscious of the wavering confines of his conscious mind, an expanding and contracting, a fluctuating horizon where the light of awareness meets the darkness of oblivion; and in keeping aware of that area of light and at the same time watching the horizon for a suggestion of more light, the poet induces that new light into his consciousness; as when, at twilight, no stars are visible to a casual glance, but shine out in answer to a concentrated stare. Such lights come, of course, from the latent memory of verbal images in what Freud calls the preconscious state of the mind; or

* See Read, *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, p. 30.

from the still obscure state of the unconscious, in which are hidden, not only the neural traces of repressed sensations, but also those inherited patterns which determine our instincts.”*

Jung makes similar remarks about really great literature. This is the product of “the visionary mode” of artistic creation as opposed to what he calls the “psychological.” “The psychological mode deals with materials drawn from the realm of human consciousness—for instance, with the lessons of life, with emotional shocks, the experience of passion and the crises of human destiny in general—all of which go to make up the conscious life of man, and his feeling life in particular. This material is psychically assimilated by the poet...and given an expression which forces the reader to greater clarity and depth of human insight by bringing fully into his consciousness what he ordinarily evades and overlooks or senses only with a feeling of dull discomfort.....In its activity it nowhere transcends the bounds of psychological intelligibility. Everything that it embraces—the experience as well as its artistic expression—belongs to the realm of the understandable.”† The visionary mode reverses all the conditions of the psychological. We are “reminded in nothing of everyday, human life, but rather of dreams, night-time fears and the dark recesses of the mind that we sometimes sense with misgiving.” Referring to the second part of *Faust* as an apt illustration of the latter method,

* This extract from Lubbock's Introduction to the *Letters of Henry James* is quoted by Read in his *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, p. 38.

† Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, pp. 179-89.

Jung says, "The experience that furnishes the material for artistic expression is no longer familiar. It is a strange something that derives its existence from the hinterland of man's mind—that suggests the abyss of time separating us from pre-human ages, or evokes a super-human world of contrasting light and darkness. It is a primordial experience which surpasses man's understanding."*

The connection between great literature and personality, which is controlled by the unconscious, is pointedly brought out by one fact, *viz.*, what has been called by Read "the intermittency of genius." Why inspiration works fitfully and often at very long intervals, certainly seems to be a difficult question. Read suggests a possible answer and says, "I think....that this problem of the relations of personality to character does provide the right setting for such questions." He remarks that creative activity continues only so long as the poet's personality or instinctual life is not interfered with and character is not developed through repression and discipline.

Keats's views of poetic art seem to find support in these speculations of Psycho-analysis. That literary creation is prompted by the deepest depth of the unconscious, is the essence of Keats's remarks on Shakespeare. "The poetry of Shakespeare is generally free as the wind—a perfect thing of the elements, winged and sweetly coloured. Poetry must be free. It is of the air, not of the earth; and the higher it soars the nearer it gets to its home."† What

* Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 180.

† On Keats in "Richard Duke of York."

he praises in these lines is Shakespeare's freedom from self-opinionativeness, and from the obsession of theories, fixed ideas and dogmas. Disinterestedness is looked upon as the rare gift of Shakespeare, who is thus distinguishable from Wordsworth with his passion for life in nature, Coleridge with his love of mystery and the supernatural and Byron with his sneers against convention, his anti-social bias and passionate temper. The laws of the conscious mind do not *control* Shakespeare. This also seems to be the meaning of the phrase "negative capability" in the following sentence from Keats's letter* to George and Thomas Keats: "Several things dovetailed in my mind, and at once it struck me what quality went to form a Man of Achievement, especially in literature, and which Shakespeare possessed so enormously—I mean *Negative Capability*, that is, when a man is capable of being in *uncertainties, mysteries, doubts*, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." Keats is quite explicit in a letter to his friend Bailey†: "Men of Genius are great as certain ethereal chemicals operating on the Mass of *neutral* intellect—but they have *not any individuality, any determined character*." A passage from another letter‡ of Keats brings out more clearly his conception of the psychology of poets as creative artists. Self (or the ego as coherent mental process) being at the root of man's conscious activity, creative or otherwise, Keats denies it to poets, whose work does not involve any deliberate

* Dated the 21st December, 1817.

† Dated the 22nd November, 1817.

‡ To Richard Woodhouse, dated the 27th October, 1818.

mental effort and is almost unconscious. 'They are, as it were, mere passive instruments operated by forces beyond their ken. "As to the poetical character itself (I mean that sort of which, if I am any thing, I am a Member; that sort distinguished from the Wordsworthian or egotistical sublime; which is a thing *per se* and stands alone) it is not itself—it has *no self*—it is *everything and nothing*. It has no character—it enjoys light and shade; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things any more than from its taste for the bright one; because they both end in speculation. A poet is the most unpoetical of any thing in existence; because he has no *identity*—he is continually in for—and *filling some other body*. The sun, the moon, the sea, and men and women who are creatures of impulse are poetical and have about them an unchangeable attribute—the poet has none; no identity—he is certainly the most unpoetical of all God's creatures."*

These ideas appear in the following verses of Keats :

Where's the Poet? show him! show him!
 Muses nine! that I may know him.
 'Tis the man who with a man
 Is an equal, be he king,
 Or poorest of the beggar-clan,
 Or any other wondrous thing

* Italics mine.

A man may be 'twixt ape and Plato ;
'Tis the man who with a bird,
Wren, or Eagle, finds his way to
All its instincts ; he hath heard
The Lion's roaring, and can tell
What his horny throat expresseth,
And to him the Tiger's yell
Comes articulate and presseth
On his ear like mother-tongue.*

The sudden and unexpected efflorescence of the poetic genius of Keats is an illustration of the mysterious operation of the unconscious. Keats had no taste for poetry and had not read much of English poetry till his seventeenth year. Books of travel, history and mythology absorbed his attention, while active physical exercise, not contemplation, was his passion. It was the study of Spenser that liberated his creative impulse and led to the composition of his first poem. And his masterpieces were composed within the surprisingly short period of about two years, which is a record in literary history.† His vocation as poet could not have been induced by his earlier tastes or habits of life. Pugnacious and passionate, he was just the reverse of a visionary. Yet he developed into a consummate poet of languors and dreams, sensuous and melodious. Like Athene springing up full-armed from the head of Zeus, like Aphrodite rising from the sea-foam in all her manifold loveliness, masterpieces of literary art emerged from the

* *Fragment*, dated 1818.

† Byron, Shelley and Burns—to mention only a few short-lived poets—took much longer periods to produce their masterpieces.

dim recesses of the personality of Keats, absolutely unannounced. In the profound depths of the unconscious strange and unknown forces are in operation. None has any opportunity of watching them, and nobody knows of their potentiality. Suddenly there is an outburst, and we feel puzzled and astonished. Says Jung, "As long as the unconscious is in a dormant condition, it is just as if there were nothing at all in that hidden region. We are really and most thoroughly unconscious of the existence of the unconscious. We are therefore always surprised afresh to discover that something can jump upon our back or fall upon our head out of mere nothingness, radically altering the pattern of our individual or social lives. It was there *in potentia*, but no one could see it with the eyes or touch it with the hands, and thus it was not in consciousness. But it existed below the threshold of awareness. It was *still* unconscious, like a sun below the horizon. . . . We are always surprised by the fact that something comes out of what we call 'nothing'."*

"if poetry comes not as naturally," says Keats, "as the leaves to a tree, it had better not come at all."† He is thus a believer in poetic inspiration. Poetry should be written, according to him, without any previous preparation and as soon as the impulse is felt. The creative urge has

* *The Integration of the Personality*, pp. 10-11.

† Letter to Taylor, dated the 27th February, 1818. In the *Ion* and the *Phaedrus* Plato explains how poetry is inspired. But poets are not different in Plato from philosophers, and their inspiration or madness is the effect of a mental discipline or harmony which is the direct opposite of the instinctual life or life of sensations which Keats loved,

been called *enthusiasm* which may appear any moment, and immediate advantage should be taken of it. Says Hazlitt, "An improving poet never becomes a great one, who is one of the men who do not develop through a series of phases, but after an obscure incubation suddenly emerge complete." This is illustrated in Milton's manner of composition and also partly in that of Keats. Inspiration has been the mark of prophets and of geniuses, whose work, whatever its nature, is greatly facilitated by it. Undoubtedly it varies in keenness and duration. Read quotes a passage from Henry James, describing his creative experience when one night he began to compose a novel which he had in mind: "Momentary side-winds....break in every now and then to put their inferior little questions to me; but I came back, I come back, as I say, I all throbbingly and yearningly and passionately....come back to this way that is clearly the only one in which I can do anything now, and that will open out to me more and more, and that has overwhelming reasons pleading all beautifully in its breast. What really happens is that the closer I get to the problem of the application of it in any particular case the more I get *into* that application, so that the more doubts and torments fall away from me, the more I know where I am."*

The word 'vocation' is often used in Psycho-analysis along with the word 'inspiration.' To have 'vocation' means 'to be addressed by a voice.'

* See *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, p. 37. The passage has been taken from some pencilled lines among Henry James's working notes for the novel.

A man with a personality has always a vocation, and the promptings of the unconscious seem to him to be the voice of God. "That many go to ruin upon their own ways means nothing to him who has vocation. He must obey his own law, as if it were a demon that whisperingly indicated to him new and strange ways. Who has vocation hears the voice of *the inner man*; he is called. And so it is the legendary belief that he possesses a private demon who counsels him and whose mandates he must execute. A familiar example of this kind is Faust and a historic case is the *daimon* of Socrates."* Vocation is figured in Keats's poem in the readiness with which Endymion responded to the blandishments of 'a bright something' that descended from the heavens and pressed him by the hand in his dream :

I was distracted; madly did I kiss
The wooing arms which held me, and did give
My eyes at once to death: but 'twas to live,
To take in draughts of life from the gold fount
Of kind and passionate looks.

He loathed his ordinary duties and pleasures, and felt miserable till he could set out in quest of Phœbe. His admission is clear :

I, who still saw the horizontal sun
Heave his broad shoulder o'er the edge of the world,
Out-facing Lucifer, and then had hurl'd

* Jung, *The Integration of the Personality*, pp. 291-92. Keats learnt from Haydon the Platonic idea of demoniac inspiration. Replying to Haydon's exhortation to begin afresh the composition of *Endymion* where he had left it off, without hesitation or fear, Keats said, "I hope for the *support of a High Power* while I climb this little eminence, and especially in my years of more momentous labour."—Letter to Haydon, dated 10-11 May, 1817.

My spear aloft, as signal for the chase—
I, who, for very sport of heart, would race
With my own steed from Araby; pluck down
A vulture from his towery perching; frown
A lion into growling, loth retire—
To lose, at once, all my toil-breeding fire,
And sink thus low !

If Phoebe stands for poetry, as one critic (Prof. Notcutt)* suggests, the urge which drives the hero on, must be the call of Poesy. Phoebe may also symbolize abstract Beauty or Truth. It is significant that the inspiration for realization of the ideal comes to him most unexpectedly in a dream. This symbolizes the unconscious. Sleep means the suspension of the vital functions as much as of the ordinary mental and intellectual processes. With this, the dark chamber of the soul is thrown open, and its denizens come out and assert themselves. Whenever the unconscious seizes the human soul, it directs it in its own way, regardless of its previous leanings and associations. If any unexpected or unpleasant consequence issues, this has to be submitted to,—the known, the obvious, the rational has to be sacrificed to the promptings of the unconscious, the potential. Endymion bids farewell to his kingdom, dignity and his accustomed life at the beckoning of the ideal or the unknown. Keats's own life offers an illustration of the nature of vocation. The young man felt that he must write immortal poetry and win fame. But medical studies appear to have absorbed his

* See the Introduction to Prof. Notcutt's edition of *Endymion*.

attention for a time and he was at a loss to decide to which he should offer his allegiance—to literary creation or to philanthropy. He finally decided in favour of the former, for its call was too insistent and he felt extremely unhappy till he could obey it and unburden his soul. In a letter to Reynolds, dated the 18th April, 1817, which announces his intention of beginning *Endymion*, he writes, "I find that I cannot exist without poetry—without eternal poetry—half the day will not do—the whole of it—I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan. I had become all in a Tremble from not having written anything of late—the sonnet overleaf (*On the Sea*) did me some good. I slept the better last night for it—this Morning, however, I am nearly as bad again." He next quotes a few lines from Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, which aptly reflect the restless condition of his own soul:

The noble Heart that harbors virtuous thought,
And is with child of glorious great intent,
Can never rest, until it forth have brought
Th' eternal Brood of Glory excellent.

Keats's letter to Leigh Hunt, dated the 10th May, 1817, gives a sad picture of misery caused by a sense of frustration in life: "I went to the Isle of Wight—thought so much about Poetry so long together that I could not get to sleep at night—and moreover, I know not how it was, I could not get wholesome food." In a letter to George Keats he wrote,* "As to what you say about my being a poet, I can

* The lines are quoted in Keats's letter to Bailey, dated the 8th October, 1817.

return no answer but by saying that the high idea I have of poetical fame, makes me think I see it *towering too high above me*. At any rate, I have no right to talk until *Endymion* is finished." Keats's 'feeling of vocation' may possibly be compared to Milton's ardent desire in early youth to write something that posterity would not willingly let die.

Though a lover of physical exercise in boyhood, Keats came to entertain scholarly ambitions in his youth. He became a lover of knowledge and felt interested in "the general and gregarious advance of intellect" or "grand march of intellect" which meant the progress of thought and philosophy. "Every Department of knowledge we see excellent and calculated towards a great whole. I am so convinced of this, that I am glad at not having given away my medical books, which I shall again look over to keep alive the little I know thitherwards."* Yet he is without parallel as a worshipper of beauty, *i.e.*, of sensuous beauty. In other words, he was more enamoured of concrete reality than of abstract speculation, and he more readily responded to the appeal of sensation and instinct. He had never any philosophical training, and he admits this: "I shall never be a Reasoner because I care not to be in the right."† There is a clear contrast between the abstract-minded Shelley and the concrete-minded Keats. Broadly speaking, intellectual beauty and the ideal of liberty constituted Shelley's atmosphere, while splash of colour and tint of flowers delighted Keats

* Letter to Reynolds, dated the 3rd May, 1818.

† Letter to Bailey, dated the 13th March, 1818.

most, especially in his early years. The spiritual teaching of Wordsworth, in spite of his naturalism, is obtrusive, and contrasts with Keats's worship of sensuous beauty. The ego was less controlled by reality and conscience in Keats than in these two poets who suppressed part of it. He had his *personality* more fully developed under the influence of the unconscious than Wordsworth in particular, whose *character* had become more fixed. When unrestrained, the ego takes in every kind of external impression, and means a free disposition to which the sensations and their memory contribute largely. It has been described as "a synthesis of the sensations," and Keats is particularly enamoured of these.*

Sir Sidney Colvin remarks: "Let it never be forgotten that 'sensations' contrasted with 'thought' mean for Keats not pleasures and experiences of the senses as opposed to those of the mind, but direct intuitions of imagination as opposed to deliberate processes of the understanding."† But imagination itself is based on the memory of sensations.‡ The sensuous experiences of a receptive nature are assimilated, become part and parcel of life and memory and flower forth into imagination which reveals itself in literary creation. Read quotes a passage from the autobiographical journal of the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke in support of this: "In order

* Worship of sensuous beauty, however, is only one aspect of Keats. He also speaks of the mighty *abstract idea* of Beauty and 'the *principle* of beauty in *all* things.' His Platonism or intellectual idealism is to be considered in this connection. See Chap. IV.

† *John Keats*, p. 266.

‡ See Garrod, *Keats*, p. 39 and F. R. Leavis, *Revaluation*, p. 248.

to write a single verse, one must see many cities, and men and things; one must get to know animals and the flight of birds, and the gestures that the little flowers make when they open out to the morning. There must be *memories* of many nights of love, each one unlike the others, of the screams of women in labour, and of women in childbed, light and blanched and sleeping, shutting themselves in. But one must also have been beside the dying. And still it is not enough to have memories. One must be able to forget them when they are many, and one must have the immense patience to wait until they come again. For it is the *memories* themselves that matter. Only *when they have turned to blood within us*, to glance and gesture, nameless and no longer to be distinguished from ourselves—only then can it happen that in a most rare hour the first word of a poem arises in their midst and goes forth from them.”* Thus Sir Sidney Colvin’s remark does not clash with the conclusions of psycho-analysis. Keats’s love of sensuous beauty was a fact, and it found expression in many of his letters. His imagination has to be traced to his sensuousness as its ultimate source.

Keats’s *Endymion* is based on a mythological story. Two Elizabethan writers had dealt with it before Keats.† Pursuit of something fascinating is really the point of the story whether in its original form or its later versions. This is a primordial experience which has different manifestations in different circumstances. The charming object appears now

* Read, *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, p. 119.

† See Chapter IV.

as a celestial body, and now as a moral ideal or an abstract conception.* Psycho-analysts like Jung regard such an experience as a manifestation of what is called *collective unconscious* as distinct from *personal unconscious*. The contents of the latter "constitute the personal and private side of psychic life" and "chiefly the so-called feeling-toned complexes." The contents of the collective unconscious are universal in their nature and are called Archetypes. These are images impressed upon the mind and transmitted by heredity to posterity.† But they are too profound to find adequate expression in any commonplace story, and require adequate symbols for the revelation of their full significance. Myth and fable are well-known symbols of Archetypes. These also appear in ancient literatures in the garb of natural phenomena, *e.g.*, encroachment of winter on summer, the phases of the moon, sunrise, sunset, etc. Great poetry must have a universal appeal and must therefore be based on, and nourished by, the universal experiences of mankind. Hence it has to press into its service the Archetypes or unconscious psychic dispositions as shaped by heredity. Looked at from this point of view, Keats's use of the myth of Endymion is significant.

The forces, instincts and tendencies that are embedded in the unconscious defy analysis and

* In Keats the fascination is that of Poetry or of the beauty of Truth or of service to suffering humanity.

† "We mean by collective unconscious, a certain psychic disposition shaped by the forces of heredity; from it consciousness has developed."
—Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 190.

definition. Their nature and attributes can only be dimly suggested. Hence the introduction of vague and typical characters in what has been called the visionary mode of artistic creation. "Man has known of it (*i.e.*, the unconscious) from time immemorial—here, there, and everywhere; for primitive man to-day it is an unquestionable part of his picture of the cosmos. It is only we who have repudiated it because of our fear of superstition and metaphysics, and because we strive to construct a conscious world that is safe and manageable in that natural law holds in it the place of statute law in a commonwealth. Yet, even in our midst, the poet now and then catches sight of the figures that people the night-world—the spirits, demons and gods."* These remarks of Jung throw a shaft of light on the gods, goddesses and shadowy beings that flit through the dusky regions in *Endymion* and *Hyperion*.

"A great work of art," it has been remarked, "is like a dream; for all its apparent obviousness it does not explain itself and is never unequivocal."† The similarity points to the common source of art and dream. Both proceed from the unconscious. *Endymion* possesses this feature of great art, *viz.*, that it is ambiguous, and does not explain itself clearly. It is capable of more interpretations than one. It is, on the face of it, a mythological story retold in the manner of the nineteenth century; it is an allegory of the quest of the Platonic ideal of beauty; it also symbolises the conflict in Keats's

* Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, p. 188.

† *Ibid.*, p. 198.

mind between the claims of poetry and philanthropy and his final choice of the vocation of a poet. It would be difficult to select any one of these interpretations as perfect and rule out the others. They are the reactions produced on the minds of different readers with their different tastes, training and outlook. A great work of art has invariably more facets than one, and has to be appraised from a number of view-points, because many ideas are crystallized in it.

Another point of resemblance between dream and poetry is that both abound in images. The word *imagination* is specially significant in this context. Poetic imagination has been identified with what is known as day-dreaming. Poetry is a matter not merely of language or sound, but also of imagery, which forms the contents of dreams.* Picturesqueness, colour-effects, gorgeousness and profusion mark Keats's imagery, and Keats has been regarded as a precursor of Pre-Raphaelite poetry in England. His appeal to the visual sense is overwhelming. This is combined with his appeal to the ear, based on rhythm,

* Says Read, " a poem is more than an essence of language ; it is this essence allied to imagery. In later stages of human development it may be this essence allied to abstract thought, or discourse ; but this is the rarest type of poetry and invariably a prelude to poetic decadence. Visual or verbal, all art is predominantly eidetic, emotionally aware of the plastic reality of its images.

In this art resembles the dream. We all remark on the vividness of our dreams. Confusion there may be, but no vagueness or mistiness. Each person or object has a separate and discrete existence, and the landscape of dreams is as carefully and distinctly composed as the landscape in a mediaeval painting. The dream, in fact, is a combination of acute sensational awareness with an unnatural order."—*Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, pp. 103-4.

melody and rhyme. Keats's poetry can, from this point of view, be contrasted with that of Wordsworth who associates melody and rhythm not so much with graphic or impressive images as with abstract ideas or simple sensations. The imagery in the following passages is incomparable, and brings out some of the special features of Keats's poetry :

Within his car, aloft, young Bacchus stood,
Trifling his ivy-dart, in *dancing mood*,
 With *side-long laughing* ;
And little rills of crimson wine imbrued
His *plump white arms*, and shoulders, enough white
 For Venus' *'pearly bite* :
And near him rode Silenus on his ass,
Pelted with flowers as he on did pass
 Tipsily quaffing.

and,

His palace bright
Bastion'd with pyramids of glowing gold,
And touch'd with shade of *bronzed obelisks*,
Glared a blood-red through all its thousand courts,
Arches, and domes, and fiery galleries ;
And all its curtains of Aurorian clouds
Flushed angrily : while sometimes eagle's wings,
Unseen before by Gods or wondering men,
Darken'd the place ; and neighing steeds were heard,
Not heard before by Gods or wondering men.

The arrangement of images in dreams and in poetry is similar. It does not always follow any logical order. Without vagueness, there is yet some

confusion. Though art is generally based on selection and rejection, it has been remarked that great art is lacking in meticulous intelligible disposition, while the dream usually arranges its elements according to some symbolic intention. Read observes, "....the more we examine the history of art, the more evident it becomes that the works of art which survive are those which most nearly approach to the illogical order of the dream. Art retreats before the intellect, or grows stiff and atrophied and survives only in the records of academies. But those works of art which are irrational and dream-like—legendary myths and folk-tales and the poems which embody them—these survive all economic and political changes.... They are told and retold in every age and every climate, and though modified in detail, are always essentially the same—irrational and super-real, significant beyond their immediate meaning."* This extreme view may be objected to. Nonetheless it is true that logical arrangement is not the chief characteristic of great poetry. Dryden and Pope have it, but Shelley and Blake are without it to a large extent. Its absence from Keats is more glaring, except in his later work. *Endymion* is lacking in the beauty of order. Sequence is not noticeable in the narrative portion, nor proportion and symmetry in the descriptive. The latter produces the impression of tangled overgrowths and the former of a phantasmagoric show. *Hyperion*, though less open to criticism from this point of view, is incomplete and probably would have been inconclusive,

* *Collected Essays in Literary Criticism*, p. 104.

if completed.* Matthew Arnold's charge of incoherence against *Endymion* is not unfounded, and probably it holds good against romantic poetry as such—poetry in which imagination as opposed to intellect predominates, and sensuous imagery is the main attraction.

Keats has been called a poet of languors. His emotional abandon is only paralleled by his readiness to receive sense-impressions. Both indicate a passivity which was in strange contrast with his pugnacious spirit and physical energy. So far as his deeper psychic life was concerned, he gave himself up fully to forces beyond his control and really became a helpless instrument in their grasp. The feeling tone of the extracts quoted below is transparent :

Beneath my palm-trees, by the riverside,
I sat a-weeping: in the whole world wide
There was no one to ask me why I wept,—
And so I kept
Brimming the water-lily cups with tears
Cold as my fears.†

.. .. .

The day is gone, and all its sweets are gone!
Sweet voice, sweet lips, soft hand, and softer breast,
Warm breath, light whisper, tender semi-tone,
Bright eyes, accomplished shape, and lang'rous waist,
Faded the flower and all its budded charms,
Faded the sight of beauty from my eyes,
Faded the shape of beauty from my arms,
Faded the voice, warmth, whiteness, paradise—

* "Keats cannot bring himself to point the moral which he has so far drawn."—H. W. Garrod, *Keats*, p. 72.

† *Endymion*, Bk. IV.

Vanish'd unseasonably at shut of eve,
 When the dusk holiday—or holynight
 Of fragrant-curtained love begins to weave
 The woof of darkness thick, for hid delight....*

To use the language of Psycho-analysis, Keats is swayed by the dark unconscious, which shapes his being as it likes, and carries him along in its head-long rush. The ordinary checks on emotion and instinct are not available to him. The guidance of reason and experience which change their direction or moderate their force, is not within his reach. The ideal which inspires Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty* is not his. The "stern Daughter of the voice of God" conveys no message to him; his is the mood of self-surrender, the mood which underlies Shelley's lines :

The wandering airs they *faint*
 On the dark, the silent stream—
 The *Champak* odours *fail*
 Like sweet thoughts in a dream ;
 The nightingale's complaint,
 It *dies* upon her heart ;
 As I must die on thine
 Oh, beloved as thou art :
 Oh, lift me from the grass !
I die : I faint : I fail !†

....now despair itself is mild,
 Even as the winds and waters are ;
 I could *lie down* like a tired child,
 And weep away the life of care

* *Sonnet.*

† *Lines to an Indian Air.*

Which I have borne and yet must bear,
 Till *death like sleep* might steal on me,
 And I might feel in the warm air
 My cheek grow cold, and hear the sea
 Breathe o'er my dying brain its last monotony.*

Keats's languor is reflected even in his verse which "moves slow, with vowel sounds in 'full-throated ease' turning out images that revolve, as the urn in his *Ode on Indolence*, with stately sequence."†

Fainting, swooning, and dizziness are Keats's favourites, and are only the reflection of his languor. The *Ode to a Nightingale*, *West Wind* and *Prometheus* furnish copious illustrations, one of which may be cited :

My heart aches, and a *drowsy numbness* pains
 My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk—‡

"Shelley was a sleep-worshipper : Keats a positive fanatic,"§ and somnolence marks many of the latter's characters. Endymion and the Indian maid fall asleep on their horses while flying up and soaring into the air. The *Ode on Indolence*, the *Ode to a Nightingale* and many other pieces abound in passages revealing Keats's love of sleepiness and drowsiness. "My *sleep* had been embroider'd with dim *dreams*," "sweet as *drowsy* noons" and "*drowsy* hour" from the *Ode on Indolence*, and "*drowsy* numbness," "*waking dream*"

* *Stanzas.*

† G. W. Knight, *The Starlit Dome*, p. 258.

‡ *Italics mine.*

§ *The Starlit Dome*, p. 261.

and "Do I wake or *sleep*?" from the *Ode to a Nightingale* may be cited as illustrations.*

Keats is equally in the grip of the unconscious when taking in sense-impressions. Scarlet, white, blue and grey : the darkness of the night and the white light of the dawn ; sun and shade ; the innumerable scents of the earth : the sounds and stirrings of life in fields and forests impress him in endless succession. Richness of tactile attraction and subtle use of taste complete the sensory suggestion of his poetry. There is hardly any order in point of time or arrangement in these sensations. This onrush of the impressions of external nature on his soul is prompted by the unfathomable mystery in his inner being.†

Keats's poetry, however, is not always the product of his unconscious or subliminal self, and hence spontaneity is not its invariable trait. The poet's mind did not always have that placidity and even tenor which characterised it at first. Self-introspection, self-analysis and self-dissection soon claimed him as their victim. This psychological change was marked during 1817-1818 and part of 1819. When composing *Endymion*, Keats wrote to Haydon, "You tell me never to despair—I wish it was as easy for me to observe the saying—truth is I have a horrid Morbidity of Temperament which has shewn itself at intervals—it is I have no doubt the greatest Enemy

* For the part played by sleep in *Endymion* and *Sleep and Poetry*, see *The Starlit Dome*, pp. 261-64. See also H. W. Garrod, *Keats*, pp. 102-4.

† "This expanding of sensory delight to the limit of consciousness is all but the central fact of his work, early or late."—*The Starlit Dome*, p. 261.

and stumbling block I have to fear—I may even say that it is likely to be the cause of my disappointment.”* Again, he wrote to Reynolds, “ . . . the world is full of misery and heart-break, pain, sickness and oppression—whereby this Chamber of Maiden thought becomes gradually darkened and, at the same time, on all sides of it, many doors are set open—but all dark—all leading to dark passages.”† When the gloomy mood was on him, Keats would indulge in self-torture, as it were, and his voluptuous languor would change into frenzied groans. Fits of morbidity made him an anatomist of Melancholy when he murmured :

No, no, go not to Lethe, neither twist
Wolf's-bane, tight-rooted, for its poisonous wine ;
Nor suffer thy pale forehead to be kiss'd
By nightshade, ruby grape of Proserpine
But when the melancholy fit shall fall
Sudden from heaven like a weeping cloud,
That fosters the droop-headed flowers all,
And hides the green hill in an April shroud ;
Then glut thy sorrow on a morning rose,
Or on the rainbow of the salt sand-wave,
Or on the wealth of globed peonies

The unconscious thus gave place to the self-conscious which “ marred not merely the quiet repose and Elysian enjoyment of his inner mind, but also the grand simplicity and spontaneity, the statuesque nudity of his native art.” But a period of conscious creative activity would be followed by a fresh period

* Letter to Haydon, dated 10-11 May, 1817.

† Letter to Reynolds, dated the 3rd May, 1818.

of spontaneity or unconscious creativeness. This process was repeated more than once.

The self-conscious was more manifest in *Endymion* than in his earlier poems, *viz.*, the poems published in 1817, although Keats was following in the latter the imitators of Spenser. His obligation was there limited mostly to diction* and did not affect his free creative urge. In his early poems Keats revealed, like other Romantics, the faculty of wonder, the instinct for beauty,† the unconscious impulse for poetic interpretation of reality which characterised the Elizabethans. Though *Endymion* reveals unconscious creative activity, Keats also becomes in this poem—possibly for the first time—a self-conscious votary of sensation and imagination. His Platonic idealism is a mark of intellectuality, though it is largely instinctive. The *Ode on Melancholy*, with its morbid gloom, indicates an extreme change in Keats's mentality.

The circumstances which disturbed Keats's mind and made it critical and introspective were part of his life-history. The onslaughts of the *Edinburgh Review* and the *Quarterly* had diminished his popularity as a poet, and he was chagrined by the extensive sale of Byron's poems. He realized that no change in public opinion was possible on account of the influence of these journals, and felt despondent. He wrote to George and

* "....a conscious imitator of the manner of other poets"—H. W. Garrod, *Keats*, p. 67.

† With reference to the poems of 1817. Colvin says, "...the spirit which animates him (Keats) is essentially the spirit of delight: delight in the beauty of nature and the vividness of sensation, delight in the charm of fable and romance....and in the exercise of the art itself which expresses and communicates all these joys."—*Keats*, p. 50 (E. M. L. Series).

Georgiana Keats : " I was in hopes that when people saw, as they must do now, all the trickery and iniquity of these Plagues they would scout them ; but no, they are like the spectators at the Westminster cock-pit—they like the battle and do not care who wins or who loses."* Further, Keats had been impressed by Bailey's interpretation of Wordsworth's humanitarianism and had, as is clear from *Endymion*, accepted the humanitarian gospel.† But his faith in this creed was rudely shaken by Bailey's own conduct. Keats had believed that Bailey, with his professed high ideals, was above improper action. But he was soon disillusioned by what he regarded as Bailey's selfishness displayed in the manner of his choosing a wife. Keats wrote, "...his so quickly taking to Miss Gleig can have no excuse—except that of a Ploughman who wants a wife."‡ He gradually inclined to the pessimistic view that selfishness and evil were ineradicable from human nature, and this partly undermined his philanthropy and his mental placidity. Keats's love of Fanny Brawne was another disquieting fact in his life, which added to his mental trouble. For nearly three months (April to June) in 1819 Keats and Fanny lived in adjoining houses under the same roof, and Keats's poems and letters of this period reflect his passion, which was intensified by this close contact. He was not yet in a position to marry, and suppression of ardent feelings naturally added to his morbidity. Jealousy also marred the

* Letter dated the 18th February, 1819.

† See H. W. Garrod, *Keats*, p. 37.

‡ Letter to George and Georgiana Keats, dated the 18th February, 1819.

course of his love, and "the green-eyed monster" worked mischief. All these possibly aggravated his incipient malady to which he eventually succumbed.

Such were the circumstances that led Keats to probe the depths of his own heart, to reconsider his previous estimate of men and things, to revise his first impressions and to re-value values. Self-criticism and heart-ache now replaced the unconscious operation of his mind. At one time Keats had aspired after literary fame, but he now grew indifferent to it, and compared it to a fickle and wayward girl whose favour was uncertain. The sonnets *On Fame*, written about this time, were the outcome of that morbid despair which is traceable to the adverse criticisms of *Endymion* and which put an end to his desire for laurels :

- How fever'd is that Man who cannot look
• Upon his mortal days with temperate blood,
Who vexes all the leaves of his Life's book
And robs his fair name of its maidenhood :

Again,

Fame like a wayward girl will still be coy
To those who woo her with too slavish knees,
But makes surrender to some thoughtless boy
And dotes the more upon a heart at ease—
She is a Gipsy—will not speak to those
Who have not learnt to be content without her ;
A jilt whose ear was never whisper'd close,
Who thinks they scandal her who talk about her—

A very Gipsy is she, Nilusborn,
Sister-in-law to jealous Potiphar :
Ye lovesick Bards, repay her scorn for scorn ;
Ye lovelorn Artists ! madmen that ye are,
Make your best bow to her and bid adieu,
Then if she likes it she will follow you.

Keats also felt that men were interested not in poetry which was based on truth, but in literary work which flattered their self-esteem. " I am convinced of this, and from this I have come to this resolution—*never to write for the sake of writing or making a poem*, but from running over with any little knowledge or experience which *many years of reflection* may perhaps give me ; otherwise I will be dumb."* He thus decided to give up spontaneous work which had hitherto absorbed him. His belief in poetic inspiration was shaken, for he felt the need of calm judgment and mature experience. He admitted that in the past truth and beauty had indeed flashed on him occasionally, and pure intuitions found expression in his verse: " I am three and twenty, with little knowledge and middling intellect. It is true that *in the height of enthusiasm I have been cheated into some fine passages* ; but that is not the thing."* He now wanted " to see life steadily and see it whole," and to express his mature thoughts more artistically. Three chief problems now faced Keats—love, ambition and poetry ; and he welcomed that state of " physical debility and mental apathy in which he was unable to feel the pain which these problems

* Letter to Haydon, dated the 8th March, 1819.

had inflicted on him.”* His mental malady is reflected in a letter to George and Georgiana Keats, though the occasion on which it was actually written was an accident which had happened on the 18th March, 1819†: “This morning I am in a sort of temper indolent and supremely careless : I long after a stanza or two of Thompson’s *Castle of Indolence*. . . . In this state of effeminacy the fibres of the brain are relaxed in common with the rest of the body, and to such a happy degree that pleasure has no show of enticement and pain no unbearable frown. Neither Poetry, nor Ambition, nor Love have any alertness of countenance as they pass by me : they seem rather like three figures on a Greek vase.” About two months later Keats composed the *Ode on Indolence* which reflects the tone of this passage :

The blissful cloud of summer indolence
 Benumb’d my eyes ; my pulse grew less and less ;
 Pain had no sting, and pleasure’s wreath no flower ;—
 Mental worry and despondence made him even

long for death which held out hopes of relief and peace. One of his sonnets reveals this desire :

Why did I laugh tonight ? No voice will tell :
 No God, no Demon of severe response,
 Deigns to reply from Heaven or from Hell.
 Then to my human heart I turn at once—

* *Evolution of Keats’s Poetry*, p. 577.

† The letter is dated the 19th March.

Heart! thou and I are here sad and alone;
 Say, wherefore did I laugh? O mortal pain!
 O Darkness: Darkness: ever must I moan,
 To question Heaven and Hell and Heart in vain:
 Why did I laugh? I know this being's lease,
 My fancy to its utmost blisses spreads:
 Yet would I on this very midnight cease
 And the world's gaudy ensigns see in shreds.
 Verse, Fame and Beauty are intense indeed,
 But Death intenser—Death is Life's high meed.

Part of the idea expressed in this sonnet was reproduced in a stanza of the *Ode to a Nightingale* (composed in May, 1819).

The *Epistle to Reynolds** hints at the evil in nature which leads to the struggle for existence and the destruction of the weaker, and which upset the balance of his sensitive mind:

I was at home
 And should have been most happy, —but I saw
 Too far into the sea, where every maw
 The greater on the less feeds evermore.—
 But I saw too distinct into the core
 Of an eternal fierce destruction,
 And so from happiness I far was gone.

.. .. .

The shark at savage prey—the hawk at pounce,
 The gentle Robin, like a Pard or Ounce,
 Ravening a worm,—Away, ye horrid moods!
 Moods of one's mind!

* Written in March, 1818.

The misery caused by baffled love, and Keats's rebellion against its tyranny form the subject-matter of the second ode *To (Fanny)* composed in April, 1819 :

What can I do to drive away
Remembrance from my eyes ? for they have seen,
Aye, an hour ago, my brilliant Queen !
Touch has a memory. O say, love, say,
What can I do to kill it and be free
In my old liberty ?

La belle dame sans merci, composed subsequently to the ode but also in April, 1819, is in the same strain, and is another product of the subjective malady which afflicted Keats and burnt up his heart.

About this time Keats read closely Burton's summary of the theories of melancholy as propounded by ancient, mediaeval and Renaissance physicians, philosophers and poets. They tried to find out the causes, symptoms and cures of melancholy humour. *The Anatomy of Melancholy* furnished him with the details of his sombre imagery, and the *Ode on Melancholy* in particular shows traces of Burton's influence.

Keats seems to have partially worked off the ferment of his soul once in the beginning of 1819. The mental malady was cured to a certain extent, and a return of spontaneity of literary creation was the outcome, but with a difference. The five great odes were composed towards the end of April and in May of this year. The subsidence of his inner effervescence and commotion was due partly to his being able to

effect a harmony between his conceptions of good and evil, and partly to the widening of his intellectual horizon. He wrote to George and Georgiana Keats on the 15th April, 1819: "Do you not see how necessary a world of pains and troubles is to school an intelligence and make it a soul? A place where the heart must feel and suffer in a thousand diverse ways."* Keats did attain gradually that spiritual discipline for which he had striven. His progress in the acquisition of knowledge too was rapid. "From subjective intellectual interests . . . he passed on to the true intellectual instinct which finds its satisfaction in the disinterested knowledge of things, of objective modes of being." The writer of the *Odes* was a greater philosopher than the author of *Endymion* as well as a greater artist. The perfect beauty of his latest work was indeed realized largely through "innumerable compositions and decompositions," but this was in no sense laboured or artificial. He had conquered the fitful and feverish moods in which he had written some of his earlier poems and effected a combination of his ripper knowledge and wider experience with a clear vision which made each of his odes beautiful as a whole as well as in parts.

* See A. C. Bradley, *A Miscellany*, chapter on "Keats and Philosophy."

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ERRATA

PAGE	LINE	INCORRECT	CORRECT
51	29	bootry	poetry
103	30	commentry	commentary
104	19	<i>Courteyr</i>	<i>Courtyer</i>
109	16	wh h	which
150	3	obstrusive	obtrusive

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